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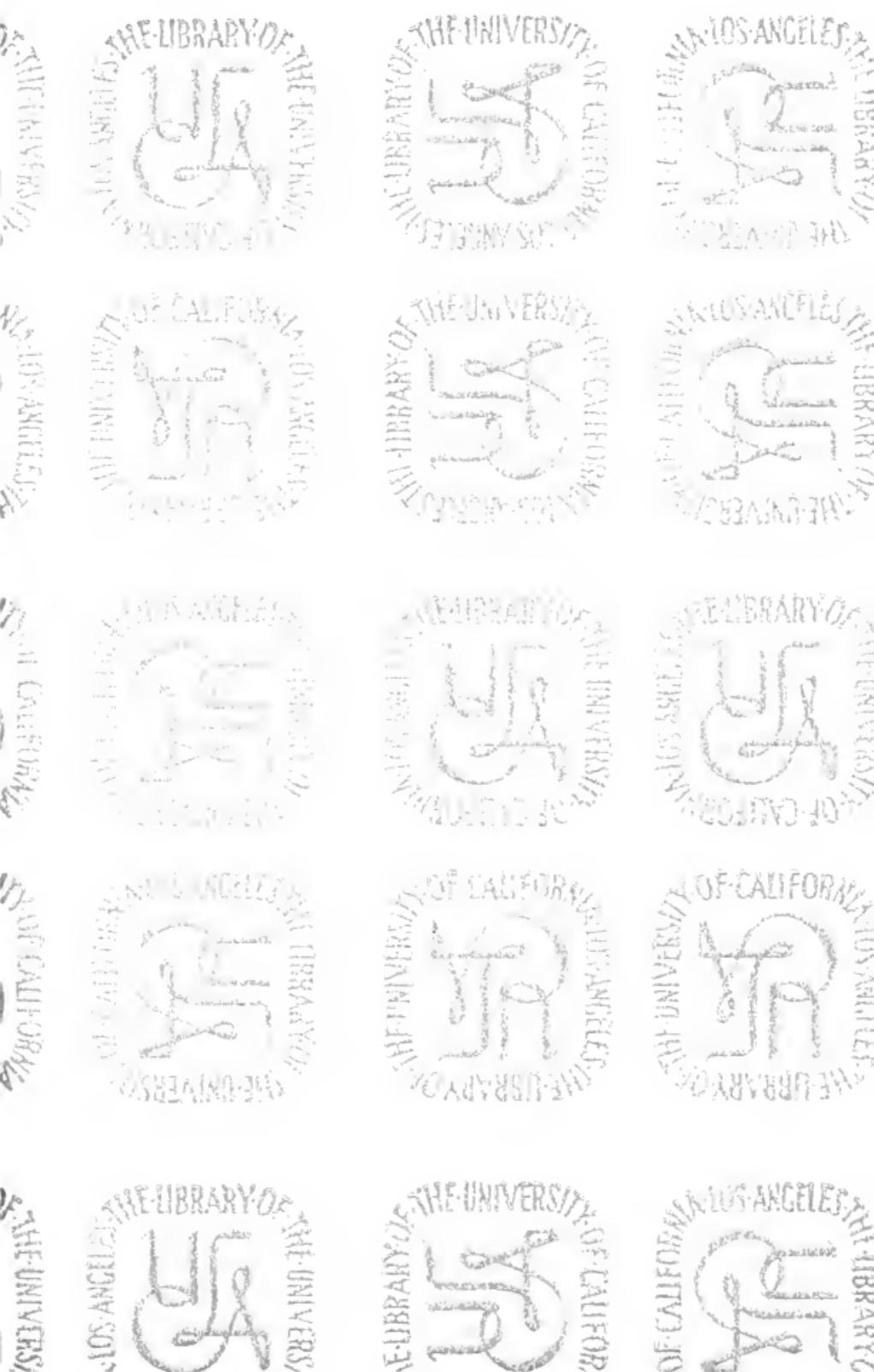
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To the Readers
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Number 3 of *The Illustrated*

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

BY

FREDERICA ROWAN



WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.—THE ANCIENT BRITONS.

FOR the earliest accounts of our country we are indebted to the Romans, that extraordinary people of antiquity, whose love of conquest was so great, that they could not rest until they had brought almost the whole of the then known world under their dominion. After having conquered Gaul, as France was then called, they must needs have Britain too : so in the year 55 before our present era, Julius Cæsar, their general, fitted out a fleet, with which he crossed the Channel, and landed on the coast of Kent. But the ancient Britons, though rude and barbarous, loved their independence, and fought bravely for it ; and the Romans did not then

succeed in subduing them. About one hundred years afterwards, however, the Britons, who were divided into many petty tribes, each ruled by its own chief, quarrelled among themselves, and one of the chiefs begged the Romans to come and help him against his countrymen; and the foreigners, having once got a footing in the country, gradually made themselves masters of it, in spite of the desperate resistance of the various tribes, and the repeated revolts of those already subjugated.

At that time our beautiful England was very different from what it is now. Comfortable homesteads; highly-cultivated fields, teeming with the various grains and vegetables fit for the food of man, and regularly separated by verdant hedgerows; rich meadow-lands, affording pasture for herds of splendid cattle; populous towns and villages, noisy with the sounds of industry and commerce—did not then, as now, meet the eye on every side. The country was covered with extensive marshes, large tracts of wild heath, and immense impenetrable forests, in which bears, and wolves, and wild-boars had their lairs; while the habitations of the natives were little better than those of the

wild beasts. Some of the British tribes, who dwelt on the coast opposite France and Belgium, having probably had intercourse with the more civilised people of those countries, had indeed profited by their example. These wore woollen garments of their own manufacture, decorated their necks and arms with ornaments of brass and iron, and dwelt in regular houses built of wood, raised on circular foundations of stone, and covered over with thatch. They also knew how to till the ground and raise corn, which they preserved from one harvest to another, by storing it in pits dug in the earth, or in the cavities of rocks. But in the remoter parts of the country the people were clad in sheepskins, lived in rude huts, constructed of the branches of the forest-trees, and fed upon flesh and milk alone, as they knew not how to grow corn or make bread. Their only riches were their flocks of sheep, which they pastured on the downs. In the north of Britain the people were in a still more savage state; they possessed not even flocks of sheep, but roamed about half-naked, and lived by the chase, being but little superior to the brutes they slew for their subsistence.

Among a people so low in the scale of civilisa-

tion there was not of course any regular system of government; yet there was among the Britons one class of men to whom all the others bowed in submission, and to whom they applied for advice and guidance in matters of importance. These were the Druids, or priests, who presided over their religious ceremonies, and who governed by means of the superstitious awe they inspired. These Druids dwelt apart from other men, in the deepest recesses of the forests, or in dark caverns where no other human foot ever penetrated. They never appeared before the people, except when in the act of chanting their wild hymns to their deities, or in offering up sacrifices to them under some mighty oak of the forest, or on one of those great piles of stone which served them as altars, and which still survive in some parts of the country, presenting memorials of what it once was. Of the nature of the religion taught by the Druids little or nothing is known, for its doctrines were kept strictly secret by the brotherhood; but it sanctioned the horrid custom of human sacrifices, and altogether had a character of ferocity and gloom. Over the imaginations of the people it exercised a powerful influence; and the Romans,

thinking that the extermination of the Druids could alone insure the subjection of the Britons, undertook an expedition against their chief seat—the island of Anglesey. With desperate bravery the Britons defended this stronghold of their ancient superstition ; the women mingled in the carnage, exciting the men to die rather than submit ; and the Druids gathered round the sacrificial fires, and rent the air with their wild incantations. But Roman discipline and skill triumphed over barbarian enthusiasm. The faithful Britons were cut down, the sacred oaks of the island felled to the ground, and the Druids immolated on the altars they had raised for their victims.

With the Roman dominion Roman civilisation was introduced into Britain. Not only the knowledge of agriculture and its attendant blessings were spread through the land, but the country was divided into regular provinces, ruled by Roman officers ; and stately cities arose, governed, according to the Roman customs, by magistrates chosen from among the citizens. These cities were connected by excellent roads, were adorned with splendid temples and palaces, with sumptuous baths, and theatres of elegant

design and structure ; and, when required, were provided with water from afar, conducted by means of aqueducts of scientific construction. Strong walls were built across the north of the country, on different points, to stay the inroads of the barbarian populations of Caledonia (thus Scotland was then called), and camps and fortresses were erected in various parts of the country, to keep the Britons in subjection. Gradually this people, if not won over to civilisation, at least abandoned in part their rude habits, and adopted the dress, the manners, and customs, and in some measure even the language of the Romans, and bent unresistingly under the yoke. Their warlike spirit was broken by the policy of their masters ; while the Christian religion, introduced among them in the second century, no doubt also contributed to subdue the wild ferocity of their character. But after having ruled over them four hundred years, the Romans, being pressed on all sides by the barbarians, whose invasions led to the downfall of the Empire, were obliged to withdraw their legions from Britain. The inhabitants of this country then rose at once in rebellion against the foreign governors who ruled their

provinces and cities, subverted the system of government introduced by their conquerors, and gathered again each tribe under its hereditary chieftain. The remembrance of the ancient state of things had been kept alive by the bards, who were the poets and historians of those days ; and who, though they could neither read nor write, transmitted from father to son the songs which contained the history of the past, and sang these to the people to the tune of their harps. But soon the various tribes fell out among themselves. One ruler was indeed elected, who was to be superior to all the rest, and to be king over all Britain ; but then every chief thought himself more fitted for this office than his brother chiefs, and the dissensions became worse than ever. Following this civil discord came famine and pestilence, and carried off multitudes of those whom the sword had spared ; and when the Picts and the Scots—two warlike nations inhabiting Caledonia — broke through the great walls erected by the Romans, the Britons, having spent their strength in combating each other, were unable to defend themselves against these invaders.

In this distress, Gworteyrn, or Vortigern, the

chief king of Britain, could think of nothing better than again to invite a foreign people, dwelling beyond the seas, to come over and help him to put down his unruly neighbours. At that very time there had arrived on the coast of Kent three vessels, manned by Jutes and Angles, tribes belonging to a nation calling themselves Saxons, or the men with the long swords, who were spread along the German coasts north of the Elbe, and the Danish peninsula of Jutland. These Saxons were a tall and robust race, with fair hair and blue eyes, renowned for their indomitable courage and great ferocity, and for their love of war, which they made the business of their lives. When, therefore, Gworteyrn addressed himself to Henghist and Horsa, the two brothers who, tradition says, commanded the Saxon vessels, proposing to them to enter the service of the Britons with their men, the brothers readily complied. It was agreed that they should bring over a considerable army of their countrymen to serve against the enemies of the Britons ; that, in return, they should be paid and supported by this people; and that the little fertile island of Thanet should be assigned to them for their dwelling-place. In the isle of

Thanet, accordingly, the Saxons took up their abode, and organized themselves, as was their wont at home ; and hence they went forth to do battle against the Picts and the Scots, armed with their formidable battle-axes, and headed by their standard, on which was displayed the figure of a white horse, emblematic of the names of their two chiefs. Their victories over the enemies of the country at first won for them the friendship and gratitude of the Britons ; but their numbers were daily increased by new arrivals, and their exactions daily became greater. No longer content with the isle of Thanet, they took possession of territories on the mainland also ; and the Britons ere long became aware that, by inviting these allies to their shores, they had prepared anew the subjugation of their country. Thus, indeed, it proved. According to tradition, Gworteyrn, who had married the beautiful Rowena, a daughter of Henghist, did more than he ought to conciliate the haughty foreigners ; and a numerous Saxon population was shortly established on the coast of Kent, with whom the Britons were obliged to treat as with an independent nation. Henghist and Horsa having matured their plans, at length

threw off the mask. They invited the leading chieftains among the Britons, to the number of three hundred, to a banquet, and then, in the midst of the festivities, fell upon their unsuspecting guests, and put them all to death. This atrocious act of treachery, instead of intimidating the Britons, as it was intended, roused their spirit. War was at once commenced against the foreign intruders; but though the ferocious Horsa fell in battle, Hengist survived, and made himself master of the greater part of Kent, which he erected into an independent kingdom, and transmitted to his descendants. Encouraged by the success of their countrymen, new hordes of Angles and other Saxons, under powerful leaders, made from time to time descents upon the British coasts; made common cause with the Picts and Scots; expelled or enslaved the rightful possessors of the land; and established kingdoms, peopled by men of their own race, who came over in ever-increasing numbers. All the bravery and perseverance displayed by the various tribes of Britons in defence of their country proved of no avail; for, being disunited among themselves, their strength was broken. Each was subdued in its turn; until, one hundred

and fifty years after the first arrival of Henghist and Horsa, the Anglo-Saxons (for under this name the Picts, the Angles, and the Saxons were eventually comprised) were left masters of the country from the coasts of Devon to the banks of the Forth. Such of the Britons who preferred independence, even in a poor and rugged country, to slavery, sought refuge in the mountains of Cornwall and Wales, or passed over to the northern province of Gaul, called Armorica, where they established themselves along the sea-coasts, and gave the country the name of Brittany.

CHAPTER II.—KING ALFRED AND THE SAXONS.

From the people who thus superseded the Britons, our country obtained its present name of England, which is a corruption of Angleland (land of the Angles), which was first changed into Engleland, and ultimately into England. But this did not come to pass for a very long

while ; for many many years elapsed before the various Saxon kingdoms were merged into one monarchy, and the whole country was designated by one name. The Jutes, the Saxons, the Angles, and whatever other Teutonic tribes settled in England, were, as we have said, ferocious barbarians, addicted to war as a pleasure and as a means of livelihood, and were followers of a religion which held up animal courage as the first of virtues, and which taught the existence of many gods, who delighted in turmoil and bloodshed. The immediate effect of the invasion of these people was therefore the introduction of a barbarism almost equal to that which prevailed before the arrival of the Romans. Their manner of proceeding was indeed such as to make it appear at first as if murder and devastation, not conquest, were their object. Wherever they advanced, the flames of burning towns and villages announced their presence ; and the inhabitants, flying to the woods for safety, were hunted like wild beasts ! But gradually this sanguinary fury subsided : the vanquished Britons were spared, as slaves, to cultivate the fields of their new masters ; and their property and habitations were no longer

destroyed, but were taken possession of by the conquerors. The Saxons then began to develop in their new country the institutions they had brought with them from the old, and which, though rude, contained the germs of much that was excellent.

Seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms—which are generally by historians comprised under the name of the Heptarchy—were founded in the country, and continued to exist side by side, but not in unity and peace. On the contrary, the most ambitious among the rulers of these kingdoms were always encroaching on the territories of their neighbours, and endeavouring to rise above the others in strength and power; and for several centuries after the total subjugation of the Britons, the history of their conquerors is little more than a narrative of bloody struggles for supremacy among the various princes. In the seventh century of our era, however, a change came over the spirit of the Anglo-Saxons. The Christian faith had been partially adopted by the Britons during the Roman dominion; but this people, now reduced to a state of slavery, were looked down upon with contempt by their oppressors, who would never

have condescended to learn from them the Christian doctrines, so much at variance with their own wild and ferocious superstitions. In the year of our Lord 597, however, Pope Gregory I., surnamed the Great, sent a party of Christian missionaries, headed by a Roman monk, by name Augustine, to preach the Christian faith to the Anglo-Saxons. Those of Kent and Essex at once received baptism at the hands of Augustine ; churches and monasteries were founded ; and Christianity, and with it a change of manners and morals, spread slowly and gradually through the country. The Anglo-Saxon kings set the example to their subjects. Frequently educated in convents, or under the guardianship of ecclesiastics, if they did not cultivate learning and piety themselves, they at least learnt to appreciate it in others, and thus became the most devoted servants of the church. They not only ceased to consider warlike courage and acquirements the most meritorious qualities in a prince, but, on the contrary, learnt to look upon those days on which they endowed a monastery or a church, and were present at its consecration, as the most glorious of their reign ; for the Chris-

tianity they had imbibed was mixed with much of gross superstition, and therefore, in those times, men thought more of endowing the church than of doing what was agreeable to the laws of God. But though the monks and ecclesiastics partook of the superstitions of the times, they were devoted to a life of study and peaceful industry, and to the maintenance of good-will among men, and therefore the establishment of communities of such men throughout the country could not but produce a most beneficial effect. Very soon after their settling in Britain, the Saxons had turned their attention to agriculture ; but under the guidance of the Christian monks, this branch of industry, as well as many others, was greatly developed. The fields were divided by hedges and ditches, and care was taken to sow each seed in the soil best adapted for it. Many of the large forests having been cut down in process of time, in order that more land might be brought under tillage, the patches of wood attached to each farm were now tended with care. Water-mills and windmills were introduced, and cattle-breeding and sheep-breeding encouraged, while immense herds of swine were reared, which found

ample nourishment among the forests of oak and beech.

But just as things were progressing thus favourably, and the number of independent kingdoms was gradually diminishing, rapine and carnage, and all the miseries of a foreign invasion, were again introduced into England by foreign barbarians. These new-comers were the Northmen—Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians—who, sprung from the same root as the Saxons, were very much like what the latter were at the time they invaded Britain. Still fanatically attached to their ancient faith, these men looked with hatred and contempt on those of their race who had deserted their war-gods to bend their knee to the “pale God” of the Christians; and when the new faith was introduced into their own country, and measures were taken to put an end to their wild and predatory habits, hordes of them took to their vessels, and sought in other countries the liberty they had lost at home. Some attacked Ireland, others founded the duchy of Normandy in France, and others again, landing on the coasts of England, or sailing up the rivers into the heart of the country, found willing auxiliaries in the Britons, who

still nourished an unconquerable hatred to their Saxon despoilers. Thrown back repeatedly by the Saxons, the Danes as often returned ; and at last, having made themselves entirely masters of the kingdom of Northumberland, they marched thence southwards, pillaging the towns, massacring the inhabitants, and setting fire to churches and monasteries ; for to shed the blood of Christian priests, to desecrate Christian temples, they reckoned among their most glorious deeds. East Anglia next came under their dominion, and obtained a Danish king ; and thus two Saxon and two Danish kingdoms now stood opposed to each other.

At this time the crown of Wessex (West-sex), one of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, devolved upon the head of a prince whose name stands pre-eminent in the history of our country during this period. In the year 871, Ethelred, king of Wessex, fell in battle against the Danes, and the people elected in his place his brother Alfred, a young man of two-and-twenty years of age, whose military skill and personal bravery seemed to qualify him for the kingly office in such troublous times. The young king did indeed for a time succeed in holding in check the

fierce invaders; but in spite of his abilities and his virtues—and he was the ablest and the most virtuous of his time—ill-will arose between him and his people. King Alfred knew not only how to read and write—an uncommon thing even for princes in those days—but he was well versed in Greek and Latin, and acquainted with the best authors in those languages; and proud of his own acquirements, he looked down with disdain on the illiterate people over whom he reigned. Though he governed wisely and equitably, he did it in a manner which was at variance with the notions and the feelings of his subjects, and they hated him for his justice. But Alfred, who kept haughtily aloof from high and low alike, perceived it not until seven years after his accession, when a formidable invasion of the Danes again threatened his kingdom with ruin. According to ancient usage, the king sent round his messengers from town to hamlet, bearing in their hands a naked sword and a pointed arrow, the sign of war, to proclaim, “Let every man who is not a *nithing* (a good-for-nothing), be it in borough or in open country, come forth and aid the king!” But the people responded not to his call, and the

Danes, profiting by their apathy, overran the country. Alfred, who would not submit, and who could offer no resistance without the aid of his people, then fled to the woods; and for months the king of the land, disguised as a shepherd, had no other shelter for his head than the miserable hut of a poor cow-herd, who kindly took him into his family without knowing who he was. Here Alfred was obliged to perform the menial services of the house—to bake the bread, and cook the broth; and here he learned to know how much goodness of heart and other excellent qualities may be found in connection with ignorance and poverty; and he longed to save his people from the oppression of the Danes, and to be their father as well as their king. In the meanwhile the people, on their side, had felt the difference between the government of a just and enlightened, though proud and haughty prince, and the rule of barbarous foreigners. Alfred was thus enabled to gather round him by degrees a faithful band of warriors, with whom he harassed the Danes until he should be sufficiently strong to venture a decisive battle. At length he determined to make an appeal to the country, and with the

forces he could gather, to make an attack upon the camp of the enemy, situated on the borders of Wiltshire and Somersetshire. Before doing this, however, and to make sure of the victory, Alfred, disguised as a harper, entered the camp of the Danes, and amused them with his ballads and songs, until he had made himself fully acquainted with their position. He then returned to his followers, who were concealed in the forest, and sent out his messengers to the Saxon inhabitants of the surrounding country, desiring them to meet him on the eastern borders of Sel-wood. During three consecutive days small bands of men were seen moving to this spot from various directions. At length all were gathered at a place called Egbert's Stone : the royal banner of Wessex was unfurled ; Alfred, at the head of his troops, attacked the Danes, and after the carnage of the day, was again the powerful sovereign of a numerous people. The Danes failed to rally, peace was concluded, and the Danish kings were compelled by treaty to pay tribute to the Saxons. The united kingdoms of Sussex and Kent now likewise proclaimed Alfred king, and all those parts of England which were not occupied by the Danes

were, for the first time since the Saxon invasion, gathered under one crown. All misunderstandings between Alfred and his people were now at an end, and so totally forgotten, that history hardly makes mention of them, but attributes to this king everything that was excellent and wise in the Anglo-Saxon institutions.

During their establishment in Britain, the Saxon chiefs, who were originally elected for an indefinite period, had assumed the character and power of hereditary kings, round whom gathered a warlike nobility, who likewise transmitted their wealth and their privileges to their posterity. But the Saxon people never abandoned the right, possessed by all nations of Teutonic descent, of voting the laws by which they were governed; and the power of the Anglo-Saxon kings was therefore always limited by that of the national assembly, called Wittenagemot (assembly of the wise men), in which originally all freeborn men had a seat and a voice. However, when tribes extended into nations, and the limits of the kingdom widened, the number of such individuals grew too great to admit of all being present in the assemblies, and representatives were therefore elected; and

eventually it came to be only persons holding a certain rank and property who were represented or sat in the Wittenagemot. As long as the country was divided into many independent kingdoms, each kingdom had of course its particular Wittenagemot : but when all were merged into one monarchy, one assembly did the chief business of the nation ; while each province or shire continued to have its local assemblies, called Sheremot (shire meeting) ; and each minor division of the country its Folkmot (people's meeting), for the discussion and settling of local affairs. The people were divided into four classes: the nobles, the freeborn men, the freedmen, and the slaves. Among the freemen, from the king to the *ceorl*, the lowest in the scale, there were gradations in rank, each rank having its peculiar privileges and its peculiar duties. Highest in rank after the king were the *ealdermen*, or earls ; after these came the *gerefas*, or sheriffs ; and then the *thegnes*, or thanes. The ceorls, though freemen, had no rank. Below these were the *serfs*, or slaves, who counted for no more than brutes, and might be sold like cattle; yet it seems that they were in general humanely treated, and not often disposed of except along

with the lands on which they dwelt, and which it was their vocation to cultivate. Originally all trades and handicrafts were performed by slaves, but as it became more and more customary to liberate slaves, or to allow them to purchase their own freedom, these men gradually settled in towns, and commenced business on their own account, placing themselves, however, under the protection of the king, or some other great lord, and paying in return certain dues and services. These men became, in consequence, what were called free burgesses; and among these burgesses of towns soon ensued associations for the promotion of trade and commerce, called guilds. These guilds or corporations came in course of time to possess many political privileges also, and became important institutions in the state. Among the remarkable ordinances issued by Alfred to insure the public peace and the safety of individuals, was that of subdividing the shires or counties into hundreds, comprising one hundred families, and these into tithings, comprising ten families, and making each hundred and each tithe responsible for the acts of the individuals belonging to it.

In spite of their excellent political institutions, the Anglo-Saxons had been too much occupied with war to attain a high degree of social refinement ; and their manners were rude, and their homes uncomfortable, though in some arts they were considerably advanced, and in dress, and in the costliness of their weapons, they were even luxurious. Their workers in metal, their weavers, dyers, and embroiderers, were in high repute ; but when King Alfred wished to divide his time regularly, so as not unconsciously to give an undue portion of it to his dearly-beloved books, none of his subjects could present him with a clock, or even a sundial. The king was obliged to have recourse to an expedient of his own invention. He had rushlights made, sufficiently long to burn from one sunrise to another. These candles he divided off by notches into a certain number of parts, and by the consumption of each part he calculated the flight of time. But Alfred soon perceived that the current of air through crevices in the walls made his candle flare out, and upset his calculations ; so he bethought him of hanging up pieces of tapestry to keep out the draught, and this is said to be the origin of

tapestry hangings in England. To King Alfred is also attributed the foundation of the English navy, and of the university of Oxford.

In spite of all that Alfred the Great did to promote enlightenment among his subjects, by establishing schools and universities, the science of law, and of the administration of justice, were in a state of infancy among the Anglo-Saxons, as among most of the other European nations of that period. When the judges, in their ignorance, and with the imperfect means at their disposal, found it difficult to determine who was the guilty person in an intricate case, recourse was had to what was called the judgment of God. In these cases the guilt or innocence of the accused was proved by their subjection to certain ordeals, such as single combat, in which the innocence of the victor was considered established by the fact of his having conquered his opponent. At other times two pieces of wood, wrapped up in wool, one of which was marked with the sign of the cross, were the means employed. Prayers having been pronounced over the bits of wood, the priest took up one, and if it happened to be that with the mark, the accused was acquitted; in the

contrary case he was declared guilty. In other instances the accused was made to hold in his hand a bar of red-hot iron, or to immerse his hand into boiling water, when his innocence or guilt was proved by his coming off scathed or unscathed from the ordeal. Sometimes the sinking or floating of the accused, when thrown into cold water, was the test; and at other times means still more absurd and futile were adopted.

CHAPTER III.—GODWIN THE SWINEHERD.

During the reigns of Alfred's son and grandson, Edward the Elder, and Athelstan, the Saxon monarchy was further consolidated, and the Danish chieftains of Northumbria and East Anglia were reduced to the state of subjects; and notwithstanding repeated revolts of the Danes, and temporary successes, the power of the Anglo-Saxon monarchy continued supreme in England for upwards of one hundred years. After the lapse of that period, Ethelred, surnamed the Unready, because he never did the

right thing at the proper moment, ascended the throne. During his reign, the piratical fleets of the Danes again began to infest the coasts of England ; and Ethelred, too indolent to employ the repressive measures necessary, bought off their attacks with money. This proof of weakness, however, only served as a new stimulant to the rapacious Northmen. In the spring of the year 994, Svend, king of Denmark, sailed up the Thames with a fleet of eighty vessels ; and in sign of his taking possession of the land, planted a lance on the banks of the river, and threw another into the waters of the first tributary stream he encountered. Again an enormous sum of money, tendered by Ethelred, bought off the invaders ; but an act of cruel and cowardly vengeance on the part of the Anglo-Saxons soon brought them back in increased numbers. Goaded beyond endurance by the continued outrages of the foreign depredators, the people, with the concurrence of the king and his officers, entered into a great conspiracy to exterminate in one day all the Danes remaining in the south and west of England since the last invasion. Accordingly, on the festival of St Brice, in the year 1003, at a given

hour, men, women, and children, belonging to the doomed race, were surprised in their houses, and mercilessly put to death. Dearly did the Saxons pay for this inhuman deed. Under pretence of seeking revenge for the slaughter of his countrymen, King Svend returned with a more formidable fleet and army than before. Again Ethelred, instead of standing up bravely in defence of his people, oppressed them with burdensome taxes, to enable him to keep off the Danes; while the latter took his money, and continued, nevertheless, to pillage and devastate the country. At last the people, tired of two tyrants, decided for the strongest. Ethelred, who had married Emma, sister of the Duke of Normandy, fled to that country with his wife and two younger sons, and Svend was proclaimed king of England. At the death of Svend, which took place the following year, and that of Ethelred, which ensued the year after, the struggle for dominion in England was continued by their respective sons, Canute (in Danish, Knud), and Edmund, surnamed Ironside, for qualities the reverse of those of his father. Ultimately the rival princes, equal to each other in courage, ability, and perseverance, and tired of a conflict

which seemed to lead to no result, determined to divide the country between them ; and on Edmund's demise, Canute the Dane remained sole king of England.

During the wars between Edmund and Canute, and after a battle which had been lost by the Danes, a Danish captain, by name Ulf, while flying from the enemy, lost himself in a forest unknown to him. Having spent the night in vain endeavours to rejoin his comrades, he met, towards morning, a young Saxon peasant driving a flock of swine. Ulf, saluting the peasant, asked his name, and begged him to be his guide through the forest. " My name is Godwin, son of Ulfnoth," replied the driver ; " and if I mistake not, thou art a Dane. Foolish is the Dane who asks aid of a Saxon ! " But Ulf redoubled his intreaties, and adding what he thought, to a poor man, would be more irresistible than prayers, he proffered a golden ring of great value. The young Saxon took the ring, and having contemplated it in silence for some moments, returned it to its owner, saying— " Thy gifts I will not take, but I will be thy guide." He then led the stranger to his father's hut, concealed him there until nightfall, and then prepared to

conduct him to the Danish camp. At the moment of starting, Godwin's father, addressing the Dane, said, "It is my only son who is thus confiding in thy honour ; but having once acted as thy guide, he can never more have peace among his countrymen. Prevail, therefore, upon thy king to take him into his service." Ulf promised to do this, and more ; and in reality, when he returned to the Danish camp, he placed the young cow-herd in a seat on a level with his own (a sign of distinction among the Danes), and treated him like his son. He also obtained for him a grade in King Canute's army ; and Godwin having served the king faithfully and ably in the wars carried on by him in Norway and Sweden, for the purpose of joining the two crowns to those of England and Denmark, which already graced his brow, the young Saxon obtained the rank of earl, and the government of a province in his native country.

After having consolidated his position in England, Canute endeavoured, by respecting the manners, the customs, and the ancient laws of the Anglo-Saxons, to gain the affections of his English subjects ; and during his wise and vigorous administration, commerce, agriculture,

and the various arts of peace, began again to flourish in the country. The king, who then reigned with undisputed authority over four realms, did not, you may be sure, lack flatterers who would fain make him believe, that because he was a successful conqueror, and a mighty monarch, he was more than man. But if what the ancient chroniclers tell us be correct, the Dane, in his dealings with these flatterers, proved that in truth he was more than a conqueror, that he was a high-souled man, and a humble-minded monarch. Among other things, they have recorded of him that one day, when walking along the sea-beach with his courtiers, he placed himself within the line of high-water-mark, and in order to have an opportunity of reproving them for their fulsome adulation, he forbade the waters of the rising tide to wet his feet. The waves of course continued, nevertheless, to roll in, and the king, having first severely rebuked them for their disobedience, was at length obliged to retreat. He then turned to his nobles and said, " You have often told me that my authority knew no bounds ; behold now its limits ; and reserve in future such expressions for that

Sovereign to whom alone they can in truth be applied!"

With a view to conciliating the English, and to gaining the alliance of the Duke of Normandy, King Canute had married Emma, the widow of Ethelred, and in dying, bequeathed the crown of England to the son whom she had borne to him. But Hardicanute—such was the name of the prince—being absent from England at his father's death, Harold, a son of Canute by a Danish princess, was proclaimed king by the Danish party in England, and maintained his position, being ultimately supported by Godwin, the son of Ulfnoth the swineherd, now the mightiest lord in the land. During Harold's reign an act of extreme cruelty and treachery was practised on one of the sons of Ethelred and Emma, in which Godwin was accused of taking a part. A letter was written to the young princes, Alfred and Edward, inviting them to come over to England, where the Saxons were anxious to place upon their heads the crown of their father. Prince Alfred, following the invitation, arrived in England, accompanied by a number of Normans. These were all immediately seized, and put to death

under the most dreadful tortures ; while Alfred, summoned before a court of justice, was sentenced to have his eyes put out, and died in consequence of the operation.

At the death of Harold, which occurred in 1040, Hardicanute was elected, and began his reign by having his predecessor's corpse disinterred, decapitated, and then thrown into the Thames. After having given this proof of a barbarous feeling of revenge against one brother, Hardicanute pretended to be very indignant at the treatment to which Alfred, his brother on the other side, had been subjected, and Godwin, and other persons accused of having been implicated in the affair, were called to an account. The presents by which Godwin bought off the royal displeasure prove the wealth and the power to which he had attained, and which made him obnoxious in the eyes of the monarch. He is said on this occasion to have presented to the avaricious king a ship, fully rigged and equipped, and manned by eighty warriors, wearing golden casques, and each carrying in his right hand a gilt javelin, and on his right shoulder a gilt battle-axe, while each arm was

encircled with a bracelet of gold, weighing six ounces.

Hardicanute, though English by birth, oppressed the Saxons, and favoured the Danes; and the spirit of the English nation being at length awakened to its former energies by his numerous exactions and cruelties, at his death they again called in a Saxon king to reign over them. They also put to death all those among the Danes who maintained a hostile position, while those long settled in the north of England, who were willing to submit to Saxon sovereignty, were spared, and ultimately became absorbed by the Saxon population. It was Godwin who, at the decisive moment, inflamed and upheld the courage of the Saxons. To him was intrusted the direction of all public matters, and had he desired it, upon him the crown would have been bestowed. But Godwin turned the attention of the people to Edward, the second son of Ethelred, the representative of their ancient line of monarchs; and the people hailed with delight Edward's return to his native land, and to the throne of his fathers. But though English by descent, Edward had ceased to be so in feeling, and the nation was doomed to a grievous

disappointment. Edward, who was unmarried, indeed, chose for his wife Ethelswitha, the daughter of the people's favourite, Godwin, but otherwise it was Normans alone who enjoyed his confidence. Among that people he had spent his youth, and formed all his early friendships ; and numbers of adventurers from the land which had so hospitably received him in his adversity flocked over to claim proofs of his gratitude ; and Edward so far forgot what he owed to the people who had called him to reign over them, that he intrusted these foreigners with the highest functions in the state. Norman captains commanded the fortresses of England ; Norman priests filled the episcopal sees, and sat in the king's councils. Whoever solicited in the Norman tongue was sure to be heard, and this language superseded at court the Saxon tongue, which was made a subject of ridicule among the king's Norman courtiers. Next the Anglo-Saxon nobles began to be ashamed of their old-fashioned ways, and to assume the language, the manners, and the dress of the strangers, and everything national daily fell more into contempt. But the people still clung with reverence and love to the language and customs

of their fathers, and began to murmur; and Godwin and his sons, who, though high in rank and power, had not forgotten their origin, sympathised with them, and adopted their cause. An occasion for open remonstrance soon occurred. A Count Eustace of Boulogne, married to Edward's sister, came over from France on a visit to his brother-in-law, and finding the Normans and the French in general so powerful in England, he seems to have thought himself entitled to take any liberty with the people who so tamely submitted to foreign encroachments. Passing through Dover on his way home, he entered the town, followed by a numerous retinue, and with the utmost insolence marked out the houses of the inhabitants in which it was his pleasure that he and his followers should pass the night. A Saxon, who ventured to resist this forcible invasion of his home, was wounded by the aggressor, and in the struggle which ensued killed the Frenchman. On hearing this, Eustace and his followers broke into the house of the Saxon, and murdered him on his own hearthstone; then mounting their horses, they rode through the town sword in hand, cutting down whoever they met on their

passage. The indignant citizens rushed to arms, and a regular combat ensued, in which thirteen of the Boulonnaise were killed. Eustace, forced to fly, sought refuge at Edward's court; and the weak monarch, instead of investigating the matter, called upon Earl Godwin, as lieutenant of the county, to chastise the town of Dover for having broken the peace. But Godwin, less prone to think the foreigners right, proposed that the matter should be brought before the legal tribunals. "It behoves thee not," said he to the king, "to condemn unheard the people whom it is thy duty to protect." Edward, indignant at being thus opposed, accused the earl of disobedience and rebellion, and sentence of banishment was pronounced by the Wittenagemot against Godwin and his sons; and to complete the disgrace of the family, the queen was shut up in a convent.

Godwin and his sons now in reality raised the standard of rebellion, asserting, however, that they did so to save the Anglo-Saxons from oppression by foreigners. Marching upon London, they got the king in their power: a reconciliation took place, and a decree of banishment was now issued against all the king's former

favourites. In the following year (1053), Godwin died ; but his eldest son, Harold, a man of very great ability, and much beloved by the people, continued until Edward's death, which took place in 1057, to maintain a great ascendancy over the king, and indeed to reign in his name ; for the last years of Edward's reign were spent in acts of devotion only, which earned for him the surname of "The Confessor." At his death Harold became king in name also—the people having elected him, in the absence of any worthy hereditary claimant to the throne. The fortunes of the swineherd's family had now reached their climax ; but were soon after to be buried in the grave, along with the independence, the language, and even the very name of the Anglo-Saxon nation.

CHAPTER IV.—WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR AND THE NORMANS.

Harold proved himself, as king, just, prudent, affable, and in every way active to promote the

happiness of the people. But he knew that a great danger threatened him—that he sat upon a tottering throne—and the people felt it as well. A strange vague sense of something dreadful being about to happen seems to have taken possession of all minds, and a comet which appeared in the heavens, and which, in those ignorant times, was always supposed to portend evil, added to the superstitious fears that prevailed. The cause of the uneasiness felt in England was an event which had taken place some time before Edward's death. While Godwin and his sons were in exile, and Edward's Norman favourites lorded it more than ever over his Anglo-Saxon subjects, William, Duke of Normandy, Edward's relative and great friend, paid a visit to England. On this occasion, it seems, the desire of becoming king of England at Edward's death entered his mind, and Edward joined in the wish and encouraged the hope. After the reconciliation between Godwin and his sons and Edward, William fore-saw that this family would form the chief obstacle to the realisation of his views upon England; and accustomed to conquer by cunning when he could not do so by open means,

he devised a stratagem, by which he extorted from Harold a solemn oath, that he would at Edward's death assist him to mount the throne.

When elected king of England, it was not, however, his broken vow which made Harold uneasy, but the knowledge of William's intentions ; while the people trembled, because they feared that luck could not attend the perjurer. On being informed of how ill Harold had kept his faith, William was highly indignant ; but, nothing daunted, he prepared to turn his rival's treachery to account. Having first, in vain, summoned Harold to resign the crown just bestowed upon him, he next published to the world the perjury of the king of England, took every means in his power to prove the justice of his own claims to that kingdom (though such claims existed nowhere except in his own desires), and appealed to the pope for his judgment in the matter, and to the barons and knights of France in particular, and of Europe in general, for their assistance to maintain his rights. The pope, glad of an opportunity of extending his power in England, responded to the appeal by excommunicating Harold as a perjured usurper, and presenting William with

a consecrated banner, and a ring containing a hair of St Peter; while hosts of adventurers from all quarters of Europe flocked to William's banners. The rapacious minds among them were lured by the spoils of England; the more chivalrous spirits grasped with equal avidity at the opportunity of gathering laurels in the service of the far-famed Duke of Normandy.

William of Normandy, who was thus preparing to invade England, was son of Robert, Duke of Normandy, surnamed *Le Diable* (The Devil)—on account of his violent temper and many misdeeds—and Arlete, a young maiden of Falaise, who had won his heart one day when he saw her washing clothes on the borders of a rivulet. Some years later, Robert, seized with a fit of repentance, determined to walk on foot to Jerusalem, by way of doing penance for his sins. Before setting out, however, he presented Arlete's son, then seven years of age, to the Normans as their future ruler; and the powerful barons of Normandy placed their hands in the hands of the child and swore him fealty. When he grew up, William gave evidence of those warlike talents and energies, and those chivalrous attainments, which at that period were all

that was required to make a man honoured; and his subjects were proud of him, while his neighbours feared him. William had, however, many of the higher qualities of a ruler also; but he was ambitious and vindictive to an excess, and cruel even beyond the ordinary degree in those rude times. One example will suffice to show you what England had to expect from such a conqueror. While he was besieging the town of Alençon, the besieged one day, from the height of their battlements, made some taunting allusion to the tanner of Falaise, from whom William descended on the mother's side. In reply to the sarcasm, he ordered the hands and feet of all the prisoners who were in his power to be cut off, and the bloody limbs to be hurled over the walls into the city.

At length William's preparations were complete. A fleet of 3000 vessels, great and small, was assembled on the coast of Normandy, and 60,000 men were ready to be embarked. In the meanwhile Harold's brother, Tostig, in league with William, and aided by a Norwegian fleet and army, had made an attack upon the north of England. Harold hurried to meet the invaders. One battle decided their fate. Tostig

and the king of Norway fell ; and the rest, taking to their ships, quitted the coasts of England, which were never again hostilely invaded from the north. But the same wind that swelled the sails of the retiring, still barbarous Northmen, wafted to England's shores their more civilised descendants of the south, destined to be her future masters. Harold was reposing at York, when he learnt that William had landed at Pevensey, and had struck his camp in the neighbourhood of Hastings. Following the inspirations of his indignation and his courage only, Harold hurried to arrest the progress of this new invader with an army much inferior in number and in warlike skill. The rivals met near Hastings on the 14th October 1066. The Saxons fought with the recklessness of despair, the Normans with the enthusiasm of hope ; and for a long while victory hung suspended between the two. Before night, however, Harold, his two younger brothers, and the greater number of his men, lay dead on the field of battle, and William the Conqueror had gained for himself the name by which he is designated in the history of our country. On the spot where the last Saxon king of England had

planted his banner, and where it had been captured by the Normans, William ordered a monastery to be built in commemoration of the day. The outer walls were traced round the hillock which the bravest of the Anglo-Saxons had deluged with their blood, and all the circumjacent lands, on which the divers incidents of the battle had taken place, formed the endowment of Battle Abbey, as this monument of the Norman Conquest of England was called. It is said that in digging the foundations of the abbey, the workmen discovered, to their dismay, that a supply of water would be wanting; but that William, on being apprised of this, replied, laughing, “Work on all the same; for if God grant me life, there shall be more wine among the monks of Battle than there is water in the best-supplied monastery in Christendom.”

It was not in this jovial spirit that William treated the conquered country. At first, indeed, after all attempts at resistance had been put down by force of arms, and he had been crowned king of England by an Anglo-Saxon bishop in Westminster Abbey, he put on a semblance of justice and mildness, and seemed to wish to

make the people forget that he was a usurper. But afterwards the Anglo-Saxons—goaded on by the oppression and tyranny of the Normans, whom he had everywhere set to rule over them, and whom he had installed in the possessions of all those who had taken arms in defence of their country—broke out in insurrection, rallying again round their national chiefs ; and then William showed himself in a very different character. A regular war of extermination was carried on against the Saxons ; no means of conciliation were tried ; but in those parts of the country where the resistance was greatest, whole tracts of land of many miles in extent were laid entirely waste. The habitations were reduced to ashes, the implements of husbandry destroyed, the cattle and other moveable property carried off to the castles of the Normans, and those among the inhabitants who could not escape, were left to perish from hunger in the woods.

When numbers had thus been driven out of the country, or had fallen in battle, or died from sheer want and misery, then began the great division of the spoils, by which the whole of the landed property of the Anglo-Saxon nobility

and gentry was transferred to the Normans and French who had aided William in conquering the country. Reduced to beggary, those who a few brief months before had been the wealthiest, the most powerful, the most honoured in the land, had no alternative but to become humble dependants on their despoilers, to seek new fortunes in other countries, or to fly to the woods and marshes, there to become the chiefs of bands of outlaws, who sought, by petty attacks upon the conquerors, to avenge the wrongs under which they were smarting. And to the woods and marshes many of the bravest hearts of the country did flee. On the confines of Cambridgeshire and Norfolk in particular, in the so-called Isle of Ely, surrounded by swamps and marshy grounds, whither the cavalry of their persecutors could not follow them, numbers of the Saxon fugitives assembled, and formed a great military station, called the Camp of Refuge. Thither fled many of the leading men among the Saxons, followed by their retainers, and bringing with them as much of their property as they could save from the depredators. Thither also came patriotic bishops and abbots, with the treasures of their churches and convents, to devote them

to the cause of their country ; and hence appeals were made to foreign allies to come and help the Saxons to liberate their country.

Fearing that the reinforcements which the Danes, the Irish, and the Scotch were preparing to bring to the Saxons, might indeed prove formidable, William at length determined to make a strong effort to reduce the Camp of Refuge. He ordered the Isle of Ely to be besieged by sea as well as by land, while the Norman pioneers set to work to open a passage for a regular assault. But months elapsed ; and though the Isle of Ely was so closely blockaded that no provisions could be introduced from without, and famine began to rage in the camp, its gallant defenders, ready to endure everything rather than submit, remained as firm as before. There was, however, in the isle a monastery, the monks in which, unaccustomed to hardships, could not long bear the sharp pang of hunger, and these betrayed their countrymen into the hands of the Normans. The royal troops having been secretly introduced into the camp, put 1000 of the refugees to death. The rest, who were forced to surrender, were treated in a most barbarous manner.

Those who fared best were shut up in dungeons ; the others had their eyes put out, and their hands and feet lopped off, and were then, in inhuman derision, allowed their liberty !

While a petty warfare such as that we have described was being carried on in many parts of England, William persevered in his cruel system of spoliation and denationalisation. Almost all the Anglo-Saxon dignitaries of the church were turned out, to make room for Normans and other foreigners : even the Anglo-Saxon saints were disinterred, and declared not to be true saints ; and while the people were thus wounded in their most sacred feelings, measures were taken to extinguish their language—an order being given that in future the French tongue alone should be used on all public occasions and in all legal documents. At length William and his Normans so completely succeeded in breaking the spirit of the Anglo-Saxons, that a quiet as of the grave succeeded to the former turbulence and opposition. Though this was at first very awful and melancholy, it ultimately led to a happier state of things. The Normans, being less harassed by the people they had so grievously wronged, began to feel less hostilely inclined

towards them, and thus peace was gradually restored to the country. But many many years elapsed before the Saxons learnt to look upon the Normans otherwise than with resentment, and before the Normans ceased to regard with contempt the individuals of a nation they had so easily subjugated. Slowly and unconsciously, however, the races became blended, as did their languages, and from the fusion arose the English nation and the English language such as both now exist!

No sooner had the oppression of the Saxons ceased in some measure to occupy William and his Normans, than they fell out among themselves. When dividing the landed property of the Saxons among the adventurers who had enrolled under his banner, the Conqueror established in England the feudal system, such as it existed on the continent—that is to say, all the lands, with very few exceptions, were divided into baronies, and these were bestowed upon the most considerable among his followers, on condition of their performing in return certain military services, and making certain payments to the crown. The barons, who thus held immediately of the crown, shared out part of their

lands on the same condition to other individuals, who were termed their vassals, as the barons were called vassals of the crown ; and these, again, frequently granted lands to others of lesser degree on similar terms. Thus throughout the land was established a chain of dependencies, the inferior owing service and obedience to the superior, while the superior was bound to protect his subordinates ; and the same person might be in the position of vassal on the one side and of liege lord on the other. Thus King William himself, in his character of Duke of Normandy, was the vassal of the king of France. Even the clergy were made to enter the feudal system, doing homage, as it was termed, for the lands they held, and furnishing men-at-arms for service in war. The king, who had reserved to himself as crown domains upwards of fourteen hundred manors, in addition to the possessions of the Saxon kings, of course ranked highest in the scale ; then came the governors of shires or counties, called counts in Norman, and earls in Saxon ; next their lieutenants, called vice-counts ; and after these barons, knights, and esquires—all noble by right of conquest. The same relations existed between the baron and

his vassals as between the king and his barons, except that between the former the tie was more intimate, because the minor vassals gathered more frequently around their chief. In his castle and in his service they received their military education, in his halls they enjoyed the pleasures of the festive board, and in his forests they pursued the still greater pleasures of the chase. As his retainers, they could alone make a figure in the world, and to him alone they could look for protection against the molestations of other great lords. He being, therefore, to them the dispenser of every good, and the defender against every danger, to him they were devoted in life and death, and they formed a compact band of warriors upon whom he could always depend. But the king having only to assemble his barons from time to time, and when once he had endowed them with fiefs, having little more to bestow, no such lien of dependency and affection sprung up between him and his immediate vassals, and he was as often opposed as supported by them. Indeed the spirit that animated the great barons, or tenants-in-chief of the crown, began to show itself very soon after the Conquest. Though

they had sworn submission and obedience to the king, they were displeased when he exacted it from them, and used the power he had bestowed upon them to stir up rebellion against him. However, William, who was in Normandy at the time, came over, and gave them a taste of the treatment to which, until then, Saxons alone had been subjected; and order was again restored in England. Many of the rebels were hanged, others imprisoned for life, and others, again, mutilated in the usual barbarous fashion. But the man who inflicted in such various ways misery upon thousands, did not enjoy in peace the fruits of his iniquities. Dark fears and suspicions were always haunting his mind: in Normandy he had to carry on bloody wars against a rebellious son, and his deathbed was rendered terrible by the remorse of a superstitious mind destitute of the consolations of true religion.

CHAPTER V.—HENRY FITZEMPRESS AND THOMAS À BECKET.

During the half century which elapsed between the death of William the Conqueror and the accession of Henry II., three kings of the Norman race reigned successively in England. These were—William Rufus, or the Red-haired, second son of the Conqueror ; Henry, surnamed Beauclerc, on account of his learning, younger brother of the Red-haired ; and Stephen, Count of Blois, who usurped the throne, to the prejudice of Henry's daughter, Maud, whom he had designated as his successor, and who was married first to the Emperor of Germany, and afterwards to Geoffrey Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and Touraine. During these reigns, though disturbed by civil wars and ecclesiastical encroachments, no essential change took place in the state of England or of the French provinces, with which by the Conquest she had become so intimately connected. Henry Plan-

enet or Fitzempress—as the son of Matilda and Geoffrey Plantagenet was called, in allusion to his mother's rank—being the legitimate heir to the crown, and succeeding to a usurper whose reign had been one long civil war, was, on his accession, welcomed with enthusiasm by the English nation. Being, moreover, a prince of great talent and of much firmness of character, and possessor by inheritance of the rich provinces of Normandy, Maine, Anjou, and Touraine, while in dower with his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, he had obtained Guienne, Poictou, Saintonge, Auvergne, Perigord, Angoumois, and the Limousin, forming together about a third part of the French monarchy, his reign was looked forward to as one likely to prove happy and glorious for himself as well as his people. But mighty as was the king, it soon appeared that there was another power in the state which pretended that he should bend his knee to it; and the struggle which ensued in consequence caused troubles innumerable.

We have seen that the Christian priests and monks were at first almost the only useful class of people in England, and that they did much for the happiness of the people and for civili-

sation. The same was pretty much the case in all Christian countries; and to the reverence felt for the sacred character of the clergy was added love and respect for them as individuals. The influence thus obtained was used for extending the power of the church; no doubt at first with a sincere desire to promote the spread of religion and the national welfare. But with every increase of power the love of it grew. At length, exceeding all bounds, the clergy of all countries, headed by the pope of Rome, not only declared themselves exalted above every temporal authority, even that of the king, and would in no matter be judged except by ecclesiastical tribunals, but the pope demanded, as head of the Christian church, that all princes should do homage to him for the countries they ruled, and thus recognise him as their master in all things. He also laid claim to the right of deposing them in cases of criminality. The temporal sovereigns struggled hard against these usurpations, but in those days the clergy taught, and the people believed, that the keys of heaven were in the hands of the pope; that men would be admitted into, or excluded from, the presence of God

according as the pope and the clergy might decide ; and the sovereigns, who in a great measure partook of the popular superstitions, or were obliged to yield to them, were frequently forced or induced to bend to the ecclesiastical will. If they resisted, the popes excommunicated them, or laid an interdict on the country. In the first case, the people were absolved by the pope from their allegiance to their sovereign, and to revolt became a meritorious act in the eye of the clergy, while every individual dying under the sentence of excommunication was believed to be eternally lost. In the second case, as in the first, divine worship, baptism, marriage, and funeral services, together with all other rites of the church, were interdicted ; and as this was very dreadful, the people frequently forced their rulers to submit to the will of the sovereign pontiff, in order that the interdict might be withdrawn. In England, owing to the particular opinions of a great number of the clergy, and to various other circumstances, the popes of Rome, though they had tried hard for it, had not succeeded in acquiring the same power as they had attained in other countries ; and the clergy, though

exercising a great influence over the minds of men, had not achieved their total emancipation from the power of the sovereign. Some points had indeed been won during the three reigns succeeding that of the Conqueror, but many more remained to be gained; and for these the struggle commenced under Henry Fitzempress.

The man who undertook to fight the battle of the clergy against the king was, like himself, of handsome appearance and winning address, and possessed of talents of the highest order, enhanced by a superior education; but of lowly birth and Saxon extraction. Thomas à Becket, such was his name, was early taken into the service of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the primate of England. His great thirst for knowledge, together with his eminent qualities, soon rendered him a favourite, and he rose from preferment to preferment. Eventually introduced to the king, he was equally fortunate in gaining the royal favour, and was raised to the dignity of chancellor—the highest civil office in the kingdom, next to that of the king. The Saxon, the first of his race who had risen to any social eminence in England since the Con-

quest, now became distinguished for the pomp of his retinue, the sumptuousness of his furniture, and his great liberality to all who approached him. The most powerful barons considered it an honour to be admitted to his table, and sent their sons to be educated in his service, and to receive the honour of knighthood from his hand; for Thomas was as distinguished as a gay cavalier as he was as a learned and able statesman. So many were the guests generally present in his house, that all could not be accommodated at his table; and we are told that, for fear the gentlemen, who were obliged to sit upon the floor, should soil their fine clothes, the floors were every day in winter covered with fresh straw, and in summer with green rushes; which shows that, with all his magnificence, Becket had not attained to having other carpets for his drawing-rooms than such as we now strew for our pigs and cattle. Indeed for many centuries after this period, though luxury continued to increase, what we now call comfort was utterly unknown. As chancellor, Becket could not aim higher than to serve the king faithfully and ably, and consequently we find him promoting in every

way Henry's interests, even in his contests with the ecclesiastical powers. But the Archbishop of Canterbury died, and Henry, wishing to have a complacent friend in the see, prevailed upon Thomas to enter holy orders, and to accept the mitre. A new act in Becket's life then began : he was now no longer content with being second in the kingdom. The gay and luxurious cavalier was transformed into an austere churchman, who inflicted upon his own person those cruel tortures, and imposed upon himself those absurd privations, which in those days obtained for a man the character of sanctity. He lacerated his flesh with leathern thongs, wore sackcloth next his skin, and changed it so seldom, that it was filled with vermin ; and not content with making pure water his sole beverage, he mixed with it bitter herbs to render it unsavoury. On entering upon his new office, Becket at once prepared to make himself the champion of all the rights already possessed by the clergy, as well as of those coveted by them. In the first contest which ensued between him and the king, Henry remained victor ; and in consequence the archbishop and the clergy were obliged to subscribe to certain articles drawn up by his order,

and known by the name of the Constitutions of Clarendon, by which the power of the clergy was greatly limited. But Pope Alexander III. refused to sanction these articles ; and Becket, finding that he had some one to back him, retracted his consent, and began to oppose the king in all ways. A new and still more formidable struggle ensued, during which Henry, who was incensed at what he regarded as ingratitude in the man whom he had raised to the dignity he enjoyed, exceeded the bounds of justice, and subjected Becket to a series of persecutions, which at length so alarmed him, that he fled to the continent for safety. Here he was warmly received and supported by the king of France and the pope, both anxious to encourage any quarrel which might tend to weaken the power of the king of England. Excommunication was pronounced against all who had abetted the king in his contest with the archbishop. Henry retaliated by withholding the payment of the usual tribute to Rome, called Peter's Pence, and by denouncing punishment of death against any person who should bring to England any interdict which might be pronounced by the pope or the archbishop against the kingdom.

But though apparently so little daunted, Henry was in reality greatly alarmed by the prospect of an interdict, for his people had long murmured. He therefore hastened to make such concessions to the proud archbishop as should induce him to consent to a reconciliation. Becket's return to England resembled the triumphal entry of a restored monarch. People of all ranks flocked along his passage, and paid to him the homage they thought due to a saint and a martyr. Even Henry, probably to conciliate public opinion, stooped to hold his stirrup while he mounted his horse; and this humility, though only feigned, rekindled the hopes and the ambition of the archbishop. Again he contended for the perfect independence of churchmen from the rule of the civil governors; again the king resisted; and the struggle, thus recommenced, was at length brought to a bloody issue. The king being one day more than usually exasperated by the humiliations heaped upon him by the archbishop, exclaimed that he should never have peace as long as the ambitious prelate lived, and upbraided his servants for leaving him so long exposed to such insults. Four gentlemen

of his household hearing this, and thinking that they would but be fulfilling the secret wishes of the king, proceeded to Canterbury, and having followed the archbishop into the cathedral, where he was at his private devotions, they basely murdered him on the steps of the altar, unrestrained by the sanctity of the spot, or by the defenceless state of their victim. This atrocious and sacrilegious deed filled the king and the nation with horror and consternation. During three days Henry shut himself up, and would take neither food nor comfort. When the first burst of grief or remorse was over—for it has always remained doubtful whether or not he had meant his servants to act as they did—the king hastened to send messengers to the pope to deprecate the wrath of the pontiff, and to declare himself innocent, but ready to submit to any penance that might be imposed upon him. The pope was not then in a position to drive matters to extremities with the king of England, so the affair was compromised. Directly afterwards Henry undertook an expedition to Ireland, while Thomas à Becket, now looked upon as a veritable martyr, was canonised, and the people made pilgrimages to his

tomb, which was enriched with presents from all parts of Europe.

The Irish, like the ancient Britons, belonged to the Celtic race; but their country having never been invaded by the Romans, they remained much longer in a state of utter barbarism. When at length they had emerged from this, by the aid of the Christian religion, which in Ireland, as in all other countries, awoke the nobler instincts of the inhabitants, they became subject to the inroads of the same Northmen who brought so much desolation upon Britain, and they were thrown back into a state almost as degraded as that from which they had been rescued. When Henry II. undertook his expedition against them, they were still divided into numerous tribes, for ever at war with one another, though one chief ruler held a nominal sway over all. Here, as in the case of the Britons, civil discord led to foreign subjugation. In the early part of Henry's reign, an Irish chieftain applied to him for assistance against a brother chief, and Henry empowered Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, surnamed Strongbow, and some other noblemen, to engage in his service. This they did so much to the purpose,

that at the death of the chieftain, Strongbow, who took his place, enjoyed for a time the authority of king of Ireland. Finding, however, that Henry meant to assume that title himself, Strongbow hastened to offer to hold the country as tenant-in-chief of the English crown. Henry consented ; and it was to secure the possession of this new dominion that he repaired to Ireland, where, however, he did little more than nominally take possession. But during subsequent reigns the English dominion over the island was permanently established, and Ireland became an integral portion of the empire.

On Henry's return to England, though no contumacious archbishop was there to beard him, new enemies and opponents arose in the bosom of his own family. His three eldest sons—instigated by the king of France, who was jealous of his power, and by their mother, who was jealous of his attentions to other women, but more than all instigated by their own bad passions—raised the standard of rebellion against their father—filling his heart with bitterness, and his empire with all the miseries of war ; for many of the warlike barons in Henry's French and English dominions joined his sons. The

king seems to have felt the cruel and unworthy conduct of his sons as a punishment sent from Heaven for his treatment of à Becket, for he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of the saint in Canterbury cathedral, and submitted to be publicly scourged by the monks attached to it. Having in this way, as he thought, satisfied justice, he set about chastising his rebellious sons, and soon reduced them to the necessity of suing for pardon, which he freely granted.

The peace and leisure which Henry then obtained he availed himself of to introduce the reforms which he had long meditated. He enacted severe laws against murder, robbery, false coining, fire-raising, and other crimes which rendered life and property insecure: he abolished trial by water ordeal; and though he left in force the trial by single combat, which was so much in accordance with the manners of the times, he endeavoured to reintroduce the more sensible Anglo-Saxon custom of trial by jury, which indeed, as civilisation increased, gradually superseded all others. He further instituted itinerant judges, who, visiting annually the various divisions of the country, afforded the people the means of appealing against the

oppressions of the feudal lords, whose numerous castles, whence they sallied forth to the attack of whoever excited their cupidity or their hostility, were also in a great measure demolished. The right of the lords of manors to appropriate all property wrecked on their shores was limited to such cases only when none of the crew survived ; while during this reign the military service of the barons was for the first time commuted for a money contribution, called *scutage*.

New dissensions in his family arrested Henry's beneficial labours. His two sons, Henry and Richard, having first made war upon each other, next turned their united arms against their father. Prince Henry, however, was soon seized by a mortal malady, and died overwhelmed with remorse—having not had time to implore the forgiveness of a father whose only fault towards his children had been that of too great indulgence. Geoffrey, King Henry's third son, soon followed his brother to the grave ; but Richard persisted in his rebellion ; and the fortunes of war having this time declared for him, the king was obliged to come to terms, and to grant a general pardon to all who had been implicated with him. When Henry saw among

the names of these that of his youngest and best-beloved son John, the cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing: a malediction upon his ungrateful children escaped his lips, and he died shortly after, without having retracted it. Thus died, of a broken heart, Henry Fitzempress, whose reign commenced under such happy auspices. Happiness had throughout his life eluded his grasp; but glory he did acquire, for he was desirous of promoting the welfare of his people, and the few years of tranquillity he enjoyed he devoted to that object.

CHAPTER VI.—RICHARD THE LION-HEARTED, AND JOHN THE CRAVEN-HEARTED.

On hearing of his father's illness, Richard hastened to Chinon to implore his pardon; but it was too late: he found the corpse only of his injured parent, from the mouth of which the blood began to ooze at the very moment he entered the chamber of death. Such a symptom

was, by the superstition of the day, attributed to the presence of the murderer of the dead ; and Richard's conscience joining in the accusation, he was strengthened in a determination previously come to with the king of France, to join the Crusaders in the Holy Land. The Crusades, or holy wars, as they were also called, were undertaken for the deliverance of the supposed sepulchre of our Lord Jesus Christ from the hands of the Mussulmans, who had become masters of Jerusalem ; and it was believed that so pious an undertaking was sufficient to atone for any sins. But besides the supposed remission of sins, military glory, the great idol of the times, was acquired by participation in these wars, in a higher degree than by any other warlike enterprises ; and to Richard's ardent mind and adventurous spirit such an expedition presented many more attractions than the prospect of staying at home and ruling his people in quiet.

Before the king set out to kill the infidels in Syria, his people enacted at home a crusade against the Jews, who in those days of ignorant and mistaken religious zeal were objects of contempt and aversion to all classes of Christians.

Henry II., who in so many respects was in advance of his age, had tolerated this people on account of their frugality, industry, and love of commerce, which benefited the country at a time when the rest of his subjects squandered away their substance in warlike undertakings only; but Richard was very different from his father, and partook of the general prejudice against the Jews. Contrary to his orders, some individuals of this race gained admission to the royal palace on occasion of his coronation; but being insulted by some bystanders, took to flight. They were pursued, and during the excitement which this caused, a rumour was spread that the king had given orders to put all Jews to death. A general massacre ensued: not only the Jews that were abroad on the streets were killed, but their houses were broken into, pillaged, and set on fire, and the inhabitants murdered. The news having spread from London to the other large cities, these followed the example of the capital. In York, five hundred of the doomed race shut themselves up in the castle; but finding that there was no hope of rescue, the men put their wives and children to death, and having hurled down their dead

bodies on the heads of their assailants without, set fire to the castle, and perished in the flames. Many were the persecutions to which, in subsequent reigns also, the Jews were subjected ; but this scene of horror was never equalled.

Having levied a large sum of money by means of numerous exactions, and by a most scandalous sale of almost every office in the state, of many of the crown domains, and of the right of feudal suzerainty over the king of Scotland, which his father had gained by force of arms, Richard set out for Palestine with a numerous army. Arrived there, the fame of the glorious feats of arms or valour performed by him soon threw into the shade those of all the other knights and princes assembled in the Holy Land, and to the jealousy of the political power of the king of England previously felt, was now added envy of his military prowess. Enmities and intrigues abounded in the camp of the Crusaders ; and the king of France, Philip Augustus, took occasion of the prevailing dissensions to return home, where he thought some advantage might be gained during Richard's absence. The king of England remaining thus the leading chief of the Christian army, still further dis-

gusted the other princes by his overbearing conduct; and several of them returned home, in their hearts vowing vengeance against him. At length Richard also, having gained some advantages over the Saracens, and seeing no immediate possibility of pushing matters further, prepared to return to his dominions. The fleet in which he left Palestine having suffered much in a storm, Richard was obliged to land on one of the Greek islands, having first had to contend with pirates, who attacked his vessel. Being at enmity with the Greeks, he assumed, on landing, a false name and title, but sent a valuable ring to the governor of the island, requesting a safe conduct. The governor recognised the giver by the costliness of the gift, but in courteous terms granted his request. On another occasion, a knight sent out to intercept his passage (for the enemies Richard had made in Palestine were trying to take him captive), overawed by Richard's fame, refused to molest him. At length the king of England reached the territories of his most deadly enemy, the Duke of Austria, and knowing how much he had to fear from him, redoubled his precautions. Obliged to part with his retinue, in order not to awaken

suspicions, Richard, whose path was constantly tracked, wandered about during three nights and days without food, and accompanied only by a single squire and a boy. Being reduced to a state of exhaustion, the wandering monarch, having approached a village near Vienna, sent forward the boy to procure some food, and the conduct of the messenger having awakened suspicions, he was arrested, and forced to reveal who and where his master was. The following night Richard was seized while asleep, and thrown into a dungeon. But the Emperor of Germany having learned that his vassal, the Duke of Austria, had caught the precious prize, claimed the right of keeping him in custody, and Richard was removed to one of the imperial castles. Here, as some accounts have it, he was treated more leniently, and mingled freely with his guards; and being an accomplished troubadour (as the poets of those days were called) as well as warrior, he entertained them with poetry and music of his own composing. On one of these occasions his voice was recognised by a faithful follower, who had gone out in search of his master, and through him Richard's subjects first learned the fate of their king.

While the king had thus been held in durance by his enemies, matters at home had taken a turn most dangerous to his interests. Longchamp, bishop of Ely, to whom he had committed the care of the kingdom during his absence, had made himself so hated by the English nobility, that they drove him out of the country ; while Philip of France instigated Richard's brother John—a base and cowardly prince, stained with every vice—to make himself master in England, and he on his side invaded Richard's French possessions. In the midst of the confusion created by these events, the news of the king's captivity reached England, and the nation, who had believed him dead, overjoyed at the intelligence, made speedy arrangements for paying the ransom of 150,000 marks (about £300,000) which his sordid enemies demanded for his release. When Philip, who had exerted himself to the utmost to prevail upon the emperor not to give up his captive, heard that Richard was at liberty, he wrote to John—"Take care of yourself; the devil is broke loose!" And indeed Richard prepared at once to take vengeance on both for their treacherous conduct. Craven-hearted John soon implored mercy, and was

contemptuously forgiven ; but between Richard and Philip hostilities continued until the death of the king of England, which took place in 1199. The bravery evinced by Richard on all occasions obtained for him the appellation of the Lion-hearted (*Cœur de Lion*), and his numerous adventures made him interesting in the eyes of his contemporaries as well as of posterity ; yet he had few qualities to recommend him except his brute courage, and a certain frankness of disposition, arising from the fearlessness of his character, and not from any high-principled regard for truth, than which nothing was more foreign to the age in which he lived.

His crown as well as his French possessions Richard bequeathed to his brother John, though —according to the rules of inheritance now prevailing, but which were at that period sometimes departed from—they ought to have descended to young Arthur, Duke of Brittany, son of his elder brother Geoffrey. John, who was arrogant, yet mean and cowardly, and therewith false, selfish, licentious, and cruel, brought upon himself and his people, during a reign of sixteen years, every humiliation to which a king and a nation can be subjected ; while the barons

of England, by their firmness, saved the country, and laid the foundations of English liberty. By his accession to the dignity and power of king of England, John became obnoxious in the eyes of his former confederate, Philip of France. This prince, espousing the cause of Arthur, who, as a minor, was, according to the feudal customs, his ward, excited the young claimant to put forward his pretensions to the crown. During the war which ensued, Arthur fell into the hands of John, and was by his orders basely assassinated. Philip, taking advantage of this, summoned John, as a vassal of France, to take his trial for the murder of a royal ward ; and on John's refusing to comply, declared him to have forfeited all the lands which he held in fief of the French crown. An army was marched into Normandy, to carry out the sentence ; and in spite of the desperate resistance of the Normans, all the French possessions of the Norman kings of England, which had added so much to their power at home and abroad, were, with the exception of the Duchy of Guienne, wrested from the degenerate John, who did not even make a serious effort to regain them. Yet, while submitting to the humiliations inflicted by an

enemy with whom he might fight on equal terms, and after having, by his cowardice, his cruelty, and his treachery, forfeited all claims to the esteem and affection of his subjects, John commenced a struggle against Pope Innocent III.—one of the most ambitious and ablest men who ever wielded that spiritual sceptre, which by this time had attained to almost absolute power in Europe. The cause of the quarrel was the election of an archbishop to the see of Canterbury. The pope appointed one Stephen Langton, but the king would not recognise him, and forbade his entering the kingdom. Expostulation and remonstrance proving of no avail, the pope at length laid England under an interdict. Still John persevered, and the dreadful sentence of excommunication was then pronounced against the country. This was tantamount to a dissolution of all the bonds of society. Law was suspended, crime could be committed with impunity, all contracts and engagements lost their binding force. Still the king held out; and the pope, as obstinate as he, then pronounced against him sentence of deposition, and called upon Philip of France to carry out the sentence. For though the popes had arrogated to them-

selves the right of deposing monarchs, the sentence of course remained a dead letter unless they could find some one to carry it into effect for them. The king of France was but too happy to avail himself of the opportunity for extending his power ; and having received assurances of support from some of the discontented barons of England, he prepared to take possession of the throne supposed to be vacant. But John, frightened by the martial array of Philip, and by the evident disaffection among his nobles, at length yielded to the will of the pope, who in consequence arrested the movements of the king of France.

John now became as abject in his submission as he had before been obstinate in his resistance, and even consented to resign his crown into the hands of Innocent, and to receive it back as a fief of the holy see ; to bind himself and his successors to obey the orders of the pope as the sovereign lord of England ; and to pay a large annual tribute to Rome. Having thus humbled himself to a foreign potentate, John resumed at home his course of oppression, licentiousness, and injustice ; and the barons of England, driven to extremities, entered into a

league, headed by Stephen Langton, the archbishop, to secure their rights and those of their fellow-subjects by more efficient means than had until then been employed. They first limited themselves to demand from the king the renewals of charters granted by his predecessors, but which had never been adhered to ; but when John continued to prove himself as little to be relied upon as ever, the barons at last took to arms, and showed themselves so resolute, that he no longer ventured to deceive or resist them. A document was drawn up setting forth the grievances of the nation, as well as the remedies proposed for their redress. Among these the most important was the stipulation, that the king should not be allowed to levy taxes without the concurrence of the great council, afterwards called the Parliament, and then composed of all the barons of the realm. This document was presented to the king in a solemn assembly of all the barons and prelates, at a place called Runnymead, between Staines and Windsor ; and here *Magna Charta* (the Great Charter), the foundation of the liberties of England, was signed on the 19th of June 1215. But John, utterly devoid of

honour, did not scruple, as soon as he had obtained sufficient power, to act in direct opposition to all the engagements he had entered into. A war between him and the barons broke out in consequence, and the latter being defeated, in their turn purchased safety at the expense of national honour by offering the crown to Louis, eldest son of the king of France. But though this prince came over to England, and was by some acknowledged as king, his rule was of short duration ; for John having ended his disgraceful life the year after the signing of Magna Charta, his son, Henry III., succeeded him, and the whole of the nation returned to its allegiance.

CHAPTER VII.—THE BARONS OF ENGLAND.

It will be remembered that William the Conqueror divided almost all the lands of England into baronies, and distributed these among the men who had helped him to conquer the coun-

try; and that these men, grown powerful, very soon showed their desire to make themselves independent of the king. However, William and his two immediate successors held the reins of government too tight to allow of any of their subjects obtaining an immoderate extent of power, and though during these reigns the nobles could oppress the people, they could not for any length of time oppose the king. But during the civil wars engendered by the contest between Stephen and Matilda, as both pretenders stood equally in need of partisans, to gain such they were obliged to cede to the barons privileges which, in the sequel, proved destructive of the public peace and of the royal authority. Among these privileges was the right to fortify their castles, granted to the nobles, and in consequence of which England was soon filled with impregnable fortresses, and, like the other countries of Europe in which the feudal system prevailed, soon became a vast arena in which the mighty of the land settled their quarrels sword in hand, while behind the strong walls of their castles they set the king and the law at defiance. The garrisons of the castles were maintained at the expense of the

defenceless country people, and the equally defenceless inhabitants of towns. Whoever among these classes was possessed of any property was seized by the rapacious barons, and put to the torture, to force them to make known where their treasures were hidden. Some were hung up by the feet, and thus exposed to a suffocating smoke ; others were suspended by the thumbs, a slow fire being lighted under their feet ; some again were thrown into pits filled with snakes, and toads, and other reptiles ; and others were shut up in dungeons so small, that they could not stand upright or extend their limbs. On other occasions arbitrary tributes were imposed upon towns and villages, and when all the money they possessed had been extorted from the inhabitants, their houses were set on fire, and a general pillage commenced. At length the consequences of their misdeeds recoiled upon the devastators themselves ; for the lands being laid waste, and the industrious populations either hunted to death or driven to seek safety elsewhere, the fields in many parts of the country were left untilled, and dreadful famines ensued, from the sufferings of which the baronial castles were not exempt.

Though a narrative of dreadful deeds such as these and many others that will follow is necessary to give a proper idea of the general manners and morality of the times, we must beware lest we be led into the erroneous belief that the evil was at any period unrelieved by good. Individuals proving themselves an honour and a blessing to the society in the midst of which they were placed—truly pious souls, whose lives were devoted to the service of God and of their fellow-beings—good and just men struggling against the iniquities of the age in which they were born—quiet, thoughtful beings, pursuing the path of science, undisturbed by the turmoil of the world around them—have appeared at all periods to vindicate the nobler qualities of human nature. Their sphere of action has not always, it is true, been such as to gain a place for their names in history, but it is to the action of the good, however obscure and unperceived at the time, that, under Providence, the progress of society is owing; and this is a thought that ought to bring home to each of us the responsibility which we bear relative to the character of the times in which we live, and of those which will succeed us.

Henry II. in a great measure remedied the evils of which we have just spoken, by keeping the barons within bounds, and forcing them to demolish a great number of their castles; but during the absence of Richard Cœur de Lion in the Holy Land, as well as during the reign of his weak and vicious brother, the power of the barons attained to a greater height than ever, and the reign of John's feeble son and successor, Henry of Winchester, or Henry III., proved little else than a struggle for supremacy between the monarch and the aristocracy. Murderers, robbers, incendiaries, and malefactors of all kinds became so numerous, that the justices were afraid of executing the laws against them. Piracies at sea were as frequent as robberies on land, and merchants and mariners were as good hands at plundering as barons and their retainers; while the inhabitants of the cities and the rude peasants of the country were as deeply tainted with the wild licentiousness of the times as any of the other classes.

As long as Henry, who was but nine years of age when he succeeded to the throne, was too young to assume himself the reins of government, the affairs of the state were admirably

managed, first by the able and virtuous Earl of Pembroke, mareschal of England, and afterwards by the equally excellent and able justiciary, Hubert de Burgh. But when the king grew to man's estate, and proved himself little better than a good-natured imbecile, ready to be governed with absolute sway by the favourite of the hour, and when he chose his favourites and ministers among foreigners, who placed their minions in all the highest and most lucrative posts in the kingdom, and looked down with contempt upon the natives ; when to this was added several disastrous foreign campaigns and heavy tributes imposed by the pope, and submitted to by the king in his weakness, then the proud blood of the barons of England boiled in their veins, and they vowed that it should no longer be thus.

The first check offered by them to the king was wise and legal. Being assembled in parliament, the king applied to them for supplies, which they refused to grant, until he should again have ratified the Great Charter, which he had sworn to on his accession, but which he had since then frequently violated. The king assented ; and to render the ceremony more

imposing, all the prelates and abbots were assembled, holding in their hands lighted tapers. The Great Charter having been read out before them, sentence of excommunication was pronounced against whoever should violate it; then throwing their tapers on the ground, the prelates exclaimed, "May the soul of every one who incurs this sentence so stink and corrupt in hell!" The king next pronounced these words : "So help me God! I will keep all these articles inviolate, as I am a man, as I am a Christian, as I am a knight, and as I am a king crowned and anointed!" Yet hardly were these awful words spoken, before the weak and wicked king, who could not resist the wishes of his favourites, violated the Charter in every way. The barons, now headed by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, a Frenchman by birth, but who had great possessions in England, assembled again in parliament. But this time they appeared in full armour, and brought with them their armed retainers ; and the king, finding himself in a manner a prisoner in their hands, was obliged to subscribe to terms which entirely deprived him of his kingly power. This parliament, which is generally called in history the *Mad Parliament*, because of the ille-

gality of its proceedings, and the state of confusion it led to, determined that unlimited authority to reform the state should be granted to twenty-four barons, selected for the purpose ; while the king, his son, Prince Edward, and all the subjects of the realm, were sworn to obey whatever ordinances these barons might choose to promulgate. The first step of the commission thus created, and at the head of which was Simon de Montfort, was to order four knights to be elected in each shire in the kingdom, who, after having inquired into the condition of their respective counties, should meet the barons in parliament and lay all grievances before them. This was an innovation which, though on this occasion merely adopted by the barons as a means of rendering themselves popular, nevertheless led to very important results ; for it furnished the classes below the barons with the means of making their wants and their wishes known in the great council of the monarch, and consequently proved an immense boon to the people. But De Montfort and his colleagues did not long continue to play so moderate a part. They placed creatures of their own as governors in all the king's castles, and even in the offices of

his household : and they displaced all the chief officers of the crown, advancing themselves or their adherents in their places. While they thus usurped the power of the crown, and used it for the oppression of the people, they also deprived the latter of the means of appeal or redress, until then possessed by them, by forbidding the judges going the circuit, or holding their courts more than once in every seven years.

During three years the barons had exercised the extraordinary powers intrusted to them without the state of the country being in any way improved, when the insolence of this oligarchy went so far as to demand that their powers should be confirmed to them not only during King Henry's lifetime, but during that of his successor also. Prince Edward, whose character was as manly and vigorous as his father's was wavering and weak, and who had until then honourably kept his promise of obedience to the dictates of the commissioners, now took to arms against them. In the civil war that ensued the barons were at first victorious ; but the avarice and immoderate ambition of De Montfort, who wished to secure to himself all the spoils and all the power in the state, at length awakened the

hatred and disgust of his party, which split into two factions, one of which joined the king. Under these circumstances De Montfort again endeavoured to strengthen his own hands by flattering the people. He directed that two representatives from each borough and city in the kingdom, the inhabitants of which had until then been too much despised to be allowed any political power, should be summoned to parliament, and be associated with the knights of the shires in a chamber apart from that of the barons ; and thus, during the struggle for power between the crown and the aristocracy, the foundations were laid of the House of Commons, which was in time to counterbalance the power of both. The free burgesses of towns, who seem to have attained to some eminence during the Saxon period, sunk, after the establishment of the feudal system, again into utter contempt. To bear arms being then considered the only honourable profession, the peaceful citizens were looked upon as little better than serfs. The mode of living of the barons and gentry besides gave little encouragement to industrial and commercial enterprise, while the lawlessness of the times acted as an effectual check on

their development. Yet slowly but surely riches accumulated in the hands of the industrious ; and by degrees needy kings and barons learnt to extend the privileges of towns and corporations, in order to obtain pecuniary assistance. Citizens also commenced arming their apprentices, and sometimes ventured to resist violence by force ; while, on the other side, battles were not unfrequently fought in the streets between the apprentices of one corporation and those of another, and a new element of turbulence was thus introduced into the state.

De Montfort's cause was but little served by his last expedient. He fell in a great battle fought at Evesham on the 4th August 1265, and the barons were held in check for a time. But though Edward I., Henry's son and successor, proved himself one of the most vigorous and most arbitrary monarchs who ever sat upon the throne of England, and though his barons never broke out into open rebellion against him, we may judge, from the insolent answer given to him by the Earl of Hereford, that they still felt their power, and were nowise disinclined to use it. Edward had assembled an army with which he intended to attack the

king of France, and which he desired to place under the command of the Earl of Hereford, constable, and the Earl of Norfolk, mareschal of England. But the barons being at that time displeased with Edward, on account of his arbitrary proceedings, the two powerful earls refused to obey. A violent altercation ensued, in which the king, addressing Hereford, exclaimed, "By Heaven, Sir Earl, you shall either go or hang!" "By Heaven, Sir King," answered the earl, "I will neither go nor hang!" And he, together with Norfolk and thirty other barons, leaving the royal presence, Edward was obliged to postpone his expedition. Indeed for upwards of two centuries after the accession of Edward I., the destinies of England continued to be swayed by the influence of the great barons, except when the monarch happened to be of so firm and decisive a character as to be able to hold them in check.

There was one peculiarity in the feudal system which must be borne in mind, in order to be able to understand the sudden revolutions which took place in the governments and in the position of parties, as also the length of time during which wars were frequently protracted.

A regular military force did not exist, and the barons and their vassals were not bound to remain under arms longer than forty days at a time. If, therefore, it suited their purpose, they could at any moment, by availing themselves of their right, dissolve the army of which they formed part ; while, on the other side, if any number of barons intended to rebel against their sovereign, or to make war upon each other, it was easy for them to assemble their vassals within a very short space, and whoever got the first start in the conflict was pretty sure of success for the time being. But gradually the number of great barons diminished, and that of smaller landed proprietors, holding immediately of the crown, and more devoted to it, increased ; because, as the lands of the barons became forfeited to the crown by some act of criminality in their possessors, the kings frequently divided them into smaller fiefs, the holders of which could not become so formidable to their authority. Gradually, also, the kings began to levy scutages on their vassals, in lieu of demanding military service ; and with the money thus obtained they hired troops, which were more completely under their control.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONQUEST OF WALES—WARS WITH SCOTLAND.

During the reign of Edward I., the Britons, who, when persecuted by the Saxons, had sought refuge in the mountain fastnesses of Wales, and had there maintained their independence, were at last brought under subjection to the English. Though frequently reduced to pay tribute to the Saxon and Norman kings of England, they were never before entirely subjugated; and though, whenever opportunity offered, they infested the English frontiers, the English, content with repelling their invasions, had never followed up the advantages gained over them, until Lewellyn, Prince of Wales, harassed by the rebellion of an undutiful son, sought the protection of Henry III., and submitted to become the vassal of England, in order to insure peace and tranquillity for his declining years. Lewellyn's eldest son and successor, David, renewed the homage; but afterwards took advantage of the

rebellion of De Montfort and the barons, and joining these, endeavoured to throw off his allegiance. On coming to the throne, Edward I. summoned Lewellyn, the son of Griffith (the rebellious son), who had succeeded to his uncle David, to renew the homage. Lewellyn refused, and Edward marched an army into the country, drove the Welsh up into the mountains, and having secured the roads, so that no provisions could be brought to them, he waited patiently until famine should force them to surrender. When this took place, hard terms were imposed on Lewellyn ; and after Edward withdrew from the field, the English lord marchers, intrusted with the guardianship of the borders, committed so many outrages on their Welsh neighbours, that these took to arms in their own defence. Edward, who was very ambitious, and fond of conquest, was not sorry of the opportunity thus afforded him, and again marched an army into Wales. This time he accomplished the conquest of the country. Another prince David, who had succeeded the second Lewellyn, was hunted from hill to hill, from one hiding-place to another, until at length, betrayed into the hands of the enemy, he was put to death.

Thus, after eight hundred years of independence, the descendants of the original inhabitants of Britain were incorporated with the divers people who had superseded them in other parts of their ancient territories ; for after this conquest, the laws and civil organization of England were introduced into Wales, which ever after remained an integral portion of the English empire. After the subjugation of the country, a scene was enacted there similar to the one in the island of Anglesea in the time of the Romans. Edward I., knowing the influence which the songs and music of the bards exercised over the people, and fearing their love of the past—of their independence and their nationality—ordered all these innocent men to be put to death. The chroniclers relate that Edward subsequently promised the people of Wales that he would give them a prince to reign over them, who was a Welshman by birth, and could speak no other language ; and that when the people, overjoyed at the proposal, replied to it by acclamation, he presented to them his infant son, afterwards Edward II., born a few months previously in the castle of Caernarvon. The prince was indeed invested with the principality

of Wales, which, on his accession to the throne, was fully annexed to the crown, and thenceforward has always given a title to the eldest son of the kings of England.

In his attempts upon the independence of Scotland, which country he next attacked, Edward was for a time not less successful. Before this period a kind of desultory warfare had repeatedly occurred between the English and the Scotch, when the kings or chieftains of Scotland passed the borders to assist some struggling party in England, or to avail themselves of civil dissensions for their advantage; or when the kings and barons of England were equally guilty of encroachments on the territories of their northern neighbours. However, up to Edward's reign, a regular war had never been carried on between the nations. At this time Alexander III., king of Scotland, who was married to Edward's sister, was killed by a fall from his horse, and his granddaughter Margaret, an infant Princess of Norway (with the king of which country Alexander's daughter had been married), succeeded by right to the Scottish throne. As the union of the kingdoms of Scotland and England seemed then to both

parties to promise many advantages, the states of Scotland and the king of England agreed that Margaret should, when she grew up, be married to the Prince of Wales, who was likewise then a child ; and that she should in the meantime be brought up at Edward's court. But the infant princess died suddenly on the passage from Norway ; and there now appeared three claimants to the crown of Scotland, in the persons of John Baliol, Robert Bruce, and John Hastings, all three descended on the female side from the Earl of Huntingdon, who, had he been alive, would have been the heir to the Scottish throne. The states of Scotland, believing Edward to be their great friend, invited him to arbitrate between the three rival princes ; and Edward, who was not at all pleased at the change of affairs brought about by the death of the little Princess of Norway, and who, to gratify his ambition, did not scruple to trample on the laws of truth and justice, availed himself of the opportunity to put his plans upon Scotland into execution. He acceded to the proposal of arbitration ; and when the Scottish prelates and nobles came to meet him, agreeably to his summons, he let them know that it was in

his capacity of feudal superior of Scotland that he felt himself bound to determine who should succeed to the vacant fief. Now Edward very well knew that though, in bygone times, the Scottish kings had sometimes acknowledged themselves vassals of the English crown, this relation between the two kingdoms had never been renewed since the period when Richard Cœur de Lion had sold his right of feudal superiority to King William of Scotland ; and the Scottish people knew this as well as Edward, and would not recognise his pretensions. But Edward was surrounded by numbers of his barons and their retainers, and the Scotch had come without any military retinue, so they could offer no efficient resistance ; and John Baliol became king of Scotland, because he was the one of the rivals most willing to acknowledge himself the vassal of England. Soon, however, he was forced by his people, who were a fierce and proud nation, to resent the indignities practised upon them by the English, and to renounce his allegiance to the king of England. Edward hastened with an army to the north to reclaim his rebellious vassal, and crossing the Scottish frontiers, commenced the war in earnest. Under

the walls of Dunbar 40,000 Scots were totally routed by 12,000 Englishmen. Equal success attended the English in every subsequent engagement ; and at the close of the year, the whole of Scotland was in the possession of Edward, who annexed the crown to that of England, after having deposed Baliol, whom he took back to London with him as a prisoner. But the spirit of the Scots was not broken. Headed by the renowned hero, Sir William Wallace, and by several other eminent patriots, they rose against their English subjugators ; and while Edward was engaged with other matters on the continent, they carried on a fierce and bloody contest against his lieutenants. Again Edward returned, defeated the Scots, and imposed his authority on them ; and again, when his back was turned, the high-spirited people rose against him—Sir William Wallace, who had been captured and cruelly put to death by the English, having been succeeded as leader by Robert Bruce, the grandson of him who contended with Baliol for the Scottish throne.

Bruce, having won the hearts of his countrymen by his brave defence of the country, was crowned king in 1306, but had still to maintain

a fierce struggle against Edward, who had marched towards the borders with a large army, and with the professed determination of making a desert of a country which had so often rebelled against him. But it was otherwise ordained : the hand of the destroyer was arrested by death, which overtook him in camp in 1307. On his deathbed he enjoined his son and successor to continue the war with vigour, and not to lay down arms before Scotland was made a dependence of England ; and he desired his body to be carried at the head of the army. But the second Edward was in character very different from his father ; peace and pleasure were his chief objects ; so, after having sent the body of his parent to Westminster, to be interred there, he withdrew from Scotland without striking a blow. On a subsequent occasion, indeed, he made a new attack on the independence of Scotland ; but being ill supported by his English barons, who held him in utter contempt, he was obliged to retreat without having gained any advantages. Once more he returned to the charge under more happy auspices, and with an army of 100,000 men, to which Bruce had only 30,000 to oppose. Yet the English suffered

a complete defeat at Bannockburn, and that battle secured the independence of Scotland, and fixed Robert Bruce firmly on the throne. During the reign of Edward III., who inherited his grandfather's abilities and ambition, renewed attempts were made to subjugate Scotland ; but though the Scottish kings were frequently prisoners in the hands of the English monarchs, the Scots always successfully resisted every attempt to place an English prince on the throne of their country, while they were destined at a subsequent period to give a line of monarchs to England.

The defeat of Bannockburn still further weakened the authority of Edward II., who, being feeble of intellect, and prone to leave the reins of government in the hands of unworthy favourites, was utterly incapable of governing so fierce and turbulent a people as the English then were. After several contests with his unruly barons, Edward was at length dethroned by a faction, at the head of which was the queen his wife, and a young nobleman, by name Roger Mortimer, Lord Wigmore. The unhappy monarch was confined as a state prisoner to the care of a set of merciless wretches.

who strove to break his heart by the indignities they practised on him. Among other humiliations offered to him, it is said that one day when he was to be shaved, they ordered water from a ditch to be brought to him for the purpose. The mild and harmless Edward burst into tears at the insult ; and pointing to the warm drops that were coursing each other down his face, said, that in spite of his jailers, he would be shaved in warm water. The heart of the people was not so hard as that of the queen and the men into whose custody she had delivered her unhappy husband. The public began to view with abhorrence her conduct, and to judge more leniently of the king's past offences ; but to guard against a still stronger revulsion of the popular feeling, the king was secretly murdered. This was the first time since the Norman Conquest that a king of England thus died ; but many more such deeds were in future to stain the annals of our country.

CHAPTER IX.—WARS WITH FRANCE— RICHARD II.

Few monarchs have been more esteemed than Edward III., who, at the age of thirteen, succeeded his poor deposed and murdered father. Owing to the prudence and vigour of his administration, England during his reign enjoyed a longer interval of internal peace and tranquillity than ever before. But however much the ability as well as the popularity of the king may have contributed to this result, it was also greatly owing to the occupation which he gave to his turbulent vassals in foreign wars. Though King John had lost to France the hereditary dominions of the Dukes of Normandy—become kings of England—the fair provinces of Aquitaine, brought in dower to Henry II. by Queen Eleanor, continued to be held in fief of France by the kings of England until the reign of Edward I. A quarrel having then arisen between some English and Norman seamen,

this led to a kind of maritime war between the seafaring populations of the two countries, in which, however, at first the two kings did not take any part. But at length Philip IV. of France was induced to call upon Edward, as Duke of Guienne, to give satisfaction for the injury done to French subjects. In order to avoid war, it was then agreed between the two monarchs that Edward should surrender the duchy during forty days, with the distinct understanding that after that period he should be reinstated in all his rights. But at the expiration of the term Philip refused to restore the duchy ; and the king of England, though burning with indignation, was prevented by matters at home from at once seeking redress. When at length he repaired to the continent with an army, the war languished, until the pope brought about a reconciliation between him and Philip, and the restitution of the fief. But Edward III., not content with being a vassal of France, laid claim to the throne of that country, which had become vacant at the demise of Charles IV. without direct heirs. Edward based his claim on his relationship to the extinct dynasty ; but this relation-

ship being derived from the female side, Philip of Valois, a French prince, who stood in a similar relationship to the throne, but on the male side, was preferred by the French nation ; and Edward did homage to him for the duchy of Guienne. Subsequently, however, Edward's hostility to France was provoked by Philip's adoption of the cause of the Scots, with whom he was at war ; and having secured to himself the support of parliament and the alliance of many continental princes, he commenced a war which, in spite of his mighty preparations, led to nothing more than his assumption of the title of King of France, though he had not attained any additional power in that kingdom. Four years afterwards, a new opportunity for war with France was eagerly seized by Edward ; and during this war, which continued for a period of twenty years, with some intervals of truce, the English acquired more military glory than had ever before fallen to their lot. The battles of Cressy and Poictiers, in which the English, fighting against fearful odds, carried the victory, and the reduction of Calais, have in particular been celebrated in history ; but it is the humanity and the chivalrous generosity evinced by

our countrymen on these occasions, more than the mere brilliancy of their military achievements, which impart to these wars their glory.

At the end of the twenty years, little more than the fame they had acquired remained to the English ; for towards the close of the war, town after town and province after province of their ancient possessions and of their new conquests were lost. The cities of Bayonne and Bourdeaux, and the fortress of Calais, continued alone in their hands.

From this period the English may be said to have become, for the first time since the Conquest, a nation entirely distinct from the French. Up to this time the English nobility and gentry prided themselves on their French extraction ; and the French language was used by them in familiar conversation, as it was in all public transactions ; while their ranks were constantly being renewed from among the nobles—natives of the French possessions of the kings of England. But the losses of Edward III. dissolved all these connections, and the wars led to an animosity between the two nations, which, further fed by subsequent events, continued up to very recent times ; while the French language

ceased to be used in the courts of law ; and the English tongue, which had arisen out of the fusion of the Saxon and the Norman, put forth its first blossoms in the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer, the first English poet of any note.

The Prince of Wales, commonly called the Black Prince (from the colour of his armour)—the idol of the English people ; and deservedly so, for his character was without a blemish—preceded his father to the grave, and his son succeeded to the throne under the name of Richard II. When Richard had attained his sixteenth year, an event took place which gave reason to hope that, when he should be of the age to assume the reins of government, he would prove himself a worthy descendant of two such illustrious princes as Edward III. and the Black Prince. The progress of society in that age was in all countries proved by the endeavours of the lowest classes of the populations to emancipate themselves from the state of slavery and degradation in which they had been held. As a natural consequence of that state, these endeavours were attended by deeds of atrocious vengeance on those classes which had so long oppressed them. The news of what had been

done by the populace in France and Flanders spread to England, and inflamed the minds of the same classes here; and the imposition of a tax of three groats per head on every individual in the realm above the age of fifteen caused the conflagration to burst forth. The tax-gatherer having presented himself in the workshop of a blacksmith, and having insulted the daughter of this man, was felled to the ground by a blow from the father's hammer. The bystanders applauded the deed, and exclaimed that it was time for the people to assert their liberty, and to take vengeance for the oppression of centuries. The whole neighbourhood accordingly flew to arms, and was soon joined by bands from different parts of the country, who, under the leadership of Wat Tyler the smith, Jack Straw, Hob Carter, and Tom Miller, whose names denote their original vocations, committed everywhere the most cruel outrages on the nobility and gentry. After some time, the infuriated mob, amounting to about 100,000, marched upon London, where they were joined by the populace of the city. Having set fire to the palaces, they pillaged the warehouses, and cut off the heads of as many of the nobility as they could lay

hands on. At length it was deemed advisable that the young king should go out and meet the mob, who desired to speak to him. Tyler, who was the spokesman, requested his confederates to keep aloof until he should give them a signal to advance. He then laid before the king the demands of the people, which were nothing more than just, though they had resorted to such atrocious and ill-advised means for having them put into effect. During the conference Tyler began to handle the hilt of his dagger, and laid his hand on the bridle of the king's horse, upon which the mayor of London, who was at Richard's side, suspecting treachery, struck the smith a violent blow with his sword. The people, seeing their leader fall, rushed forward to avenge his death, when the young king, with singular presence of mind, riding quite alone into the midst of them, exclaimed, "What mean ye by this disorder, my good people? Are ye angry that you have lost your leader? I am your king—I will be your leader!" The populace, overawed by his presence, followed him out of the town; and the king then dismissed them with a charter, granting the liberties they had demanded. But what was extorted by

force was soon retracted by superior force. No sooner had the king assembled an army, than he took the field against the rioters, defeated them, punished the ringleaders severely, and revoked the charters which had been granted to them.

Wofully did Richard disappoint the hopes of a vigorous administration, which had been raised by the courage, the presence of mind, and the address evinced by him in his meeting with the rioters. At the age of eighteen, indeed, he shook off the trammels of his uncle, the Duke of Lancaster, who had governed the kingdom during his minority; but at twenty-one his career had already been marked by so much weakness of character, by so many errors of policy, and by such a love of low pleasures, that another of his uncles, the Duke of Gloucester, was able, by the assistance of a strong party among the nobility, to seize the reins of government, under the pretext that Richard was still too young to govern. A year after this, Richard, with another burst of energy not expected from him, resumed his rights; and feeling that his power would not be secure as long as his ambitious uncle Gloucester lived, he sent him over to Calais,

where he was subsequently assassinated at the king's express command.

A short time after this event a quarrel took place between the Duke of Norfolk and Henry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, son of the Duke of Lancaster by a Spanish princess whom he had married. It was determined that the matter should be settled by single combat. The lists were marked out, the king and his court were assembled; a vast concourse of knights, and barons, and people of all classes had flocked to the spot, to see in whose favour destiny would pronounce; when Richard, fearing the consequences, suddenly stopped the proceedings, and pronounced sentence of banishment for life against the Duke of Norfolk, and of ten years against Henry Bolingbroke. The king, besides, promised his cousin, that should the Duke of Lancaster die during his absence, his inheritance should not be withheld from him. However, Lancaster died not long afterwards, and Richard took possession of the inheritance he had promised to secure to his cousin; and continued to indulge in those disgraceful pursuits, in that violence of temper, and in that love of idle show and magnificence, combined with weakness of

character and of intellect, which had before brought him into contempt. Murmurs and discontent arose on all sides ; but the king, heeding them not, undertook an expedition to Ireland, to punish some disorders which had broken out there. During his absence, Bolingbroke, now Duke of Lancaster, who was highly indignant at Richard's violation of his promise, and who had in vain remonstrated, came over to England to try his popularity against the king's unpopularity. Exerting all the gifts which nature had so lavishly bestowed upon him, he soon won a powerful party, and before Richard could return from Ireland, was at the head of 60,000 men. On all sides Richard's subjects, disgusted with his government, flocked to the standard of his handsome and engaging competitor. The very troops the king brought with him deserted to his rival, and the despairing monarch then made a fruitless attempt to fly to the continent. He was captured, insulted by his cousin, led in triumph to London, formally deposed by parliament, shut up in Pomfret Castle, and there cruelly starved to death.

CHAPTER X.—HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK —WARS OF THE ROSES.

That the bad passions which had led to faction and rebellion, and ultimately to usurpation, were not allayed by the parliament's recognition of the Duke of Lancaster as king of England, under the name of Henry IV., became evident soon after his accession ; and that the king himself never forgot how unjustly his crown was won, was evident throughout his reign of thirteen years, during which he was constantly engaged in endeavours to consolidate a throne which he felt stood on a tottering foundation. For this purpose he extended the authority of the House of Commons, in order to gain the goodwill of the people, that this might serve as a counterpoise to the power of the barons. Every extension of the privileges of the Commons was a step forward in civilisation, because, as their power extended, a greater number of individuals became participators in the benefits.

of political rights and civil liberty, and new classes were raised to wellbeing. But the means taken by Henry to conciliate the clergy led to very different results. During the reign of Richard II., one John Wickliffe had begun to preach religious doctrines based upon Scripture, but much at variance with the teachings and practice of the Roman Catholic church. Against the Lollards, as the followers of Wickliffe were called, the king induced the parliament to pass a law, called the Law against Heretics—that is, persons who differ in opinion from the received religious doctrines ; and in consequence of this law, England beheld for the first time the horrid spectacle of persons committed to the flames for their religious opinions.

In the very first parliament assembled by Henry IV., the temper of the barons towards each other was proved by the words *liar* and *traitor* bandied between them, and by forty gauntlets flung upon the floor of the House; this being the manner in which knights challenged each other to single combat. In the following year these passions broke out in conspiracy and insurrection. The king put down the rebels : as much blood was spilt upon the scaffold as

upon the field of battle ; and the Earl of Rutland, presenting to the king on the point of a spear the head of his brother-in-law, Lord Spencer, as a test of his loyalty, showed what were the spirit and the manners of the times. Two more rebellions—one in Wales under Owen Glendower, and another in the north of England under the powerful Duke of Northumberland and his son Harry Percy, surnamed Hotspur—troubled Henry's reign ; and worn out by disease and anxiety, the monarch sunk into the grave, leaving his crown to a son who had added not a little to his cares in life.

Henry V. had, as Prince of Wales, been an object of jealousy to his father, and had in consequence been excluded from all participation in the government of the state. Being of an active and lively disposition, idleness drove him into bad company ; and the heir to the crown, associated with a set of dissolute companions, disgraced himself by attacking passengers in the streets and highways, and amusing himself with the terror he and his associates inspired. But many an act of generosity, and many a proof of a noble disposition, endeared the prince to the people, in spite of his faults. On one

occasion some of the prince's confederates having been sentenced to imprisonment, he insisted on their being released ; and when this was refused, he drew his sword against the judge. The magistrate, undaunted by the rank of the offender, did his duty, and ordered the prince into confinement ; and Henry having cooled, and feeling that the judge was right, quietly submitted. The king and the people alike rejoiced in the reverence for the law shown by the magistrate and by the prince ; but when Henry succeeded his father, it was feared by some that he would revenge himself on those who had thwarted him as Prince of Wales. They knew but little Henry's noble disposition. Judge Gascoigne was the first who received proofs of the new king's regard ; and his dissolute companions were at once discarded, with a recommendation to reform in like manner as he intended to reform.

The king was true to his promise ; and his virtues and conciliating policy for a time allayed those dreadful passions which had so lately desolated the country. But though peace was thus secured at home, the greater part of this reign was occupied by war with France. This

kingdom was at that period distracted by the rivalry of the factions of the Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy, who were disputing for power, while the poor king, Charles VI., was struggling with a dreadful mental malady, which prevented him from attending to the affairs of the state. Taking advantage of the confusion, Henry proposed to the dominant faction to give him the daughter of the French king in marriage, and demanded in dower a large sum of money, together with all the provinces which had once formed the hereditary possessions of the king's of England. Weakened as they were by civil war, the French would, nevertheless, not listen to such proposals; and Henry took to arms, hoping to gain by violence even more than he had asked in dower. His first campaign, though he won the brilliant victory of Agincourt, which in the annals of England ranks with those of Cressy and Poictiers, led to no results; but a few years later, the dreadful demoralisation of the French brought about the realisation of his most sanguine hopes. The Duke of Burgundy was treacherously murdered by the followers of the *Dauphin*, as the eldest sons of the kings of France were called; and the son of the murdered

duke, willing to do anything to avenge his father's death, entered into an alliance with Henry V., who had landed in Normandy with a formidable army. A treaty was signed between the two, to the effect that Henry should marry the Princess of France; that he should be declared heir to the monarchy; and that he should govern the country during the lifetime of the poor mad king. The power of Henry's arms, aided by the Burgundy faction, next carried the treaty into effect; and while the dauphin, persecuted even by his own mother, was driven to seek an asylum elsewhere, the king of England took his place next to the throne of France, and governed in the name of his father. Henry now only visited England occasionally; and jealousy was in consequence beginning to spring up in this country, when the king, being at the summit of the glory he had coveted, his queen, the Princess of France, having presented him with a son, he died on 31st August 1422.

During the minority of Henry's infant son and successor, Henry VI., all the power which the English had gained in France was lost, and the kings of England were thenceforward

obliged to rest satisfied with the empty title of King of France, which, up to very recent times, they continued to assume, to the great, and it must be confessed just, annoyance of their proud neighbours. Two months after the death of Henry V., poor King Charles of France also died; and the English having thus lost the screen behind which they masked their usurpation, the national pride of the French began to rebel against the idea of being governed by foreigners. Even those among them who had until then been hostile to the dauphin, began to think with compassion on the wrongs inflicted on him, the rightful heir to the crown; while many other circumstances also combined to undermine the English ascendancy in the country. However, during the first seven years after the death of Henry V., they still maintained their ground; but after this period, there came forward to the assistance of the French a young enthusiastic peasant girl, who believed that she had obtained from Heaven the mission to liberate her country from the yoke of the foreigners. The faith of Jeanne d'Arc—this was her name—in her own mission was such, that it inspired others with equal faith. She was placed by the

dauphin at the head of his army, and the French, firmly believing that a Heaven-sent messenger was fighting for them, performed such prodigies of valour, that the English on every side gave way before them. The English were, besides, infected by the same superstition as the French, and the presence of the Maid of Orleans, as Jeanne was also called, generally spread a panic among them. On the 25th of May 1430, however, the spell was broken: Jeanne d'Arc was captured by the English, and the heroic, self-devoting maiden, who had saved her country from foreign subjugation, was basely abandoned by her king and countrymen, and as basely put to death by the English, who, under pretence of her being a sorceress, condemned her to be publicly burned. But in spite of this inhuman deed, which was probably intended to revive the courage of their troops, and to dishearten the French, the English did not recover their ascendancy, but lost fortress after fortress, and battle after battle, until, in 1451, the town of Calais alone remained to them of all their conquests.

In the meanwhile, England had been distracted by the dissensions and intrigues of the regents who governed during the king's minority;

and when he attained his majority, matters did not become better, for Henry VI. was so weak in mind and character, as to be quite incapable of directing himself. His queen, Margaret of Anjou, who had been selected to be his wife, because of her possessing those masculine qualities in which he was so deplorably deficient, failed to win the affections of the people, she being of a proud and vindictive temper. Disturbance and turbulence reigned on all sides ; and soon was to commence the fearful drama called in history the Wars of the Roses, because of a red rose being the device of the House of Lancaster, and a white rose that of the House of York—the two rival factions by whom the wars were carried on. When Henry's uncles were dead, and he remained the sole head of the House of Lancaster, which, as we have seen, descended from a younger son of Edward III., then Richard Duke of York, the descendant of an elder son of that same monarch, seeing that Henry's imbecility rendered him incapable of governing, made several attempts to seize power, and ultimately even put forward claims to the crown. Soon the whole nation was divided into Yorkists and Lancastrians : the

mightiest barons of the realm were ranged on each side ; battles were fought with words in parliament, and with deadly weapons in the field ; the axe of the executioner was as busy as the sword of the warrior ; for, according to the cruel practice of the times, prisoners of war were put to death as soon as captured. To make confusion worse, the lower classes rose on their own behalf, under one Jack Cade, demanding redress of grievances ; and in the meantime used the sword and the axe, as did the other factions ; and thus, in the cottage as in the palace, desolation reigned.

At length, after a victory gained by the Duke of York, a compromise was entered into by parliament, in virtue of which it was determined that Henry VI. should reign during his lifetime, but that at his death the Duke of York should succeed to the throne, to the exclusion of the king's son Edward, then an infant. But in spite of this decision, Queen Margaret stood up for her son's rights, and York fell in a battle fought near Wakefield in 1460. His eldest son, the Duke of Rutland, a beautiful and accomplished lad of seventeen, while making his escape from the field of battle, was overtaken by Lord de

Clifford, one of the Lancaster party. Struck by the boy's appearance, Clifford inquired who he was, and on being told, shouted, "Is it so? Thy father slew my father, and thus I will slay thee and all thy kin!" and he plunged his dagger into the innocent boy's heart! Such was the spirit that faction had bred, and that raged throughout the country; and as another proof of it, the head of the fallen Duke of York, decorated with a crown of silver paper, was exposed in derision on the walls of York. But Margaret's triumph was not of long duration: her troops soon gave way before the arms of the Yorkists; and while she fled to Scotland with her infant son and the king, now perfectly imbecile, Edward of York, second son of Richard, entered London, and was proclaimed king by the title of Edward IV.

During ten years there were now two kings in England; for though Henry VI. was the greater part of that time a prisoner in the Tower, and Edward IV. was at one period a fugitive in Holland, yet both continued to maintain their claims and titles, and England was deluged with the blood of their partisans. But the battle of Tewkesbury in 1470 decided

matters against Henry VI. In this battle fell the powerful Earl of Warwick, commonly called the King-maker, because of the influence he exercised on the fortunes of the kings, he having at different times adopted different sides. Margaret of Anjou and her son, for whose rights the King-maker was at this time contending, fell into the hands of Edward. The young prince having given a proud answer to the king, who asked him how he dared to enter the realm in arms, Edward brutally struck him in the face with his gauntlet, and then allowed him to be put to death. Henry VI. died immediately afterwards, and Queen Margaret, being ransomed by the king of France, withdrew broken-hearted into his dominions. Edward IV. then reigned during fourteen years in comparative peace, and died at the age of forty-two, having been as distinguished for his personal beauty as for every vice that most disgraces a monarch and a man.

He left two sons, the eldest of whom, Edward V., was proclaimed king; but he being too young to assume the government of the realm, his uncle, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, was appointed protector or regent. This Richard was a man of great ability, but devoured by am-

bition, and of a character that shunned no crime, however atrocious, for the attainment of an object. Instead of maintaining the cause of his young nephew, he, on the contrary, intrigued, and played upon the many bad passions still alive in the nation, until he got himself proclaimed king by a faction. To secure his position, he then put to death the two innocent babes committed to his care. The poor young king, and his little brother the Duke of York, who had for some time been confined to the Tower, under pretext of being held in safety, were suffocated in their sleep, and buried under a heap of stones, at the foot of the stairs leading to their room. A few brief months only did the blood-stained uncle enjoy the fruits of his iniquity. The English nation, all inured to deeds of horror as it was, revolted at crimes so unnatural as those of Richard III., and turned its hopes to Henry, Earl of Richmond, the son of a princess of the House of Lancaster and the Earl of Richmond, a son of the widow of Henry V. and of Owen Tudor, a Welsh gentleman whom she had married. Richmond, who was in Brittany, came over to England, was joined by a powerful party, and gave battle to Richard,

who was slain. Henry VII., the first of the House of Tudor, was then proclaimed king ; and as he subsequently married the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV., the interests of the two parties, it was supposed, were thus reconciled. But the king continued to persecute the Yorkists, and they retaliated with hatred and rebellions. Twice they put forward impostors, with a view to depriving him of his crown. One of these, Lambert Simnel, was made to represent Edward Plantagenet, the last of that family, and grandson of the King-maker, who had been incarcerated in the Tower, and was believed to be dead. By producing the real Plantagenet, the king unmasked the pretender ; and a contemptuous pardon having been bestowed upon the poor boy, who had been a tool in the hands of others, he next aspired to and obtained the place of scullion in the king's kitchen. The second impostor, Perkin Warbeck, who was given out to be the Duke of York, who, it was pretended, had in some miraculous way escaped from the Tower when his brother was murdered, kept up his character somewhat longer. He was cherished by the enemies of Henry at home and abroad as the "White

Rose of England," and obtained in marriage a beautiful and high-born Scottish lady. But at length he also was deserted by those who at first had made use of him for their own purposes; and after having been exposed in the pillory, he died the death of a traitor. His lovely and virtuous wife, who clung to him with undiminished affection till the last, was honoured by the queen for her fidelity with a place at court. Thenceforward Henry VII. reigned in peace, though not beloved, and exerted himself successfully in improving the material condition of the country, and in extending the power of the crown.

CHAPTER XI.—HENRY VIII.—EDWARD VI.— QUEEN MARY.

Although the history of England, during the century which elapsed between the accession of Henry V. and the death of Henry VII. in 1509, is a narrative of almost incessant warfare,

society had, in the midst of turmoil and blood-shed, been slowly working its way upwards. Almost every country in Europe had been passing through the same phases as England, and, like England, each was now coming into a more settled state. In all countries alike, by some means or other, the strength of the feudal nobility had been broken, as it was in England by the Wars of the Roses ; the labouring-classes had in a great measure been rescued from serfdom ; and the monarchs had, like Henry VII., acquired a greater degree of power. This power, though for a time it led to despotism, nevertheless vastly promoted order and stability, and by so doing, contributed materially to the further progress of society. In the course of the fourteenth century, the writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans had been restored to Europe by a few enlightened individuals, who had zealously sought out the old manuscripts, and given them to the world ; and these had exercised a great influence on the mental condition of some classes. The taking of Constantinople by the Turks in the fifteenth century, and the consequent dispersion of the Greeks, among whom some degree of learning

still remained, led to a further acquaintance with the literary productions of a highly-civilised race, and greatly stimulated the mental activity of the living generation. Poets, men of science, thinkers of all kinds, began to share with warriors the honours of the world, and numerous inventions were made calculated to increase and diffuse knowledge. The art of printing, and the manufacture of paper from cloth, which may be said to have changed the destinies of the human race; gunpowder and firearms, which effected a total revolution in the art of war; and the compass, which gave such an immense impetus to navigation—were invented. A passage round the Cape of Good Hope to India was found; Columbus had discovered America; other navigators had come upon numerous islands and continents until then unknown; and new worlds were thus opened up to European commerce and enterprise. The art of oil-painting was developed, and that of engraving on copper invented; and with all this the state of society was of course changed. Not only did cities rise into opulence and power in consequence of the spread of commerce, arts, and manufactures, but peaceful employ-

ments came to be held in honour, so that even the nobility and gentry would seek them. Such employments rendered a higher state of mental cultivation necessary; and thus education was sought, and gradually extended. Universities and schools were multiplied, and numerously attended. In the time of Henry VI. there were in the Inns of Court no less than two thousand students belonging to the class of the nobles and the gentry. Even in the relations between state and state, mental power was brought to bear upon many subjects of dispute which would formerly have been settled by brute force; and the art thus developed is what we term Diplomacy.

In spite of all this progress, a century of violence of a new kind was, however, about to open; for men began to apply the light let in upon their minds to religious subjects also, and this led to the great mental revolution called the Reformation, which commenced in England during the reign of Henry VIII. This prince, young, brave, handsome, and accomplished, and uniting in his person the rival claims of the Houses of Lancaster and York, was, when he first ascended the throne, adored by his people,

who looked forward to his reign as one promising peace and prosperity to the nation. In the commencement, indeed, not a cloud obscured the prospect. The court of England, over which a gloom had hung during the penurious administration of Henry VII., became the scene of constant gaiety and amusements ; of balls, tournaments, and gay processions, in which, it is true, the treasures amassed by the king's father were squandered away ; but the people were amused, and did not look further. Money was also spent in repeated interferences in the affairs of the continent, where France and Spain were contending for supremacy ; and while the king gratified his love of arms by these military displays, he proved his erudition and his attachment to the Roman Catholic faith by a treatise written in defence of its doctrines, which gained for him the title of "Defender of the Faith," bestowed by the pope. This treatise was directed against Martin Luther, an Augustine friar of Wittemberg in Germany, who having persuaded himself, by the study of the Bible, that there was much in the teachings and practice of the Roman Catholic church in his day contrary to the spirit of the Holy Scriptures, pointed out

these errors to other men; translated the Bible into the language of the people—a thing which had never been done before—and called upon all persons, now that the holy volume was opened to them, to judge for themselves, and to throw off the trammels in which they had until then been held. The public mind of Europe had long been prepared for this change: the Albigenses in France, Wickliffe in England, and John Huss in Bohemia, had before Luther expressed opinions in accordance with his; and the Bible being now translated into the languages of the various people of Europe, in spite of all that the pope and those who remained faithful to the ancient state of things could do, the reformed tenets spread rapidly through Germany, the north of Europe, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, and also England, though here King Henry, and his powerful chancellor, the famous Cardinal Wolsey, at first resisted the invasion of the new opinions.

Immediately after his accession, Henry had married Catharine, a Spanish princess, widow of his elder brother, and daughter of the powerful sovereigns of Castile and Arragon—Ferdinand and Isabella. Marriage with a brother's widow

was contrary to the canonical laws and the received opinions of the times. The pope had, however, granted a dispensation : the scruples which Henry had at first felt were allayed, and did not revive until after the expiration of eighteen years, and when Catharine had already borne him several children, only one of whom, the Princess Mary, survived. At this period the king formed an attachment for Anne Boleyn, one of the queen's maids of honour, a beautiful and accomplished young lady ; and being desirous of marrying her, he renewed the question of the legality of his marriage with Catharine, and endeavoured to obtain a divorce, in spite of the intreaties of the poor queen that he would not cast dishonour on her and her daughter. But the king had before this given proofs that to the more amiable qualities of his mind, which had made him so much beloved at his accession, was joined a temper headstrong, impetuous, and capricious, which governed him in all matters, which bore down all resistance ; and which being indulged by himself, and unchecked by others, was rapidly changing him into a ruthless and selfish tyrant, ready to sacrifice everything and every one for the grati-

fication of the moment's desire. The numerous delays caused in the matter of the divorce, by the political difficulties of the pope and the wish of Cardinal Wolsey to prevent the king from marrying Anne Boleyn, who was known to lean to the reformed tenets, led to the disgrace of the minister, and to a complete rupture with the see of Rome. Wolsey was banished from the king's presence, and deprived of all his honours; and one law after the other was passed severing the connection which had until then existed between the clergy of England and the see of Rome; as also annulling all powers hitherto acknowledged to reside in the pope as head of the church. That title, and the privileges attendant on it, was thenceforward to be held by the kings of England themselves. After this reform was introduced, Henry and his parliament, by virtue of the powers vested in them, declared the king's marriage with his brother's widow invalid, and Henry married Anne Boleyn, who was shortly after crowned queen.

The renunciation of allegiance to the see of Rome, which was the consequence of the Reformation in all countries where it was introduced,

in England thus preceded this introduction ; for at first Henry left the doctrines of the Romish church untouched, though he dissolved all monasteries and convents in the country, seized their property, and threw their inmates penniless and helpless upon the world. But subsequently the king promulgated a kind of Confession of Faith of his own composing, and whoever did not subscribe to the "Bloody Statute," as it was called, on account of its severity, were committed to the flames for their dissent. This confession of faith was alike distasteful to the king's Catholic and Protestant subjects ; and though the horrid fact seems almost incredible, it is calculated that during the reign of this bloody tyrant no less than 72,000 individuals of the new and of the old faith attested by their death the sincerity of their convictions. But it was not only in punishing religious dissent that Henry showed this dreadful disposition to cruelty. Whoever stood in the way of his wishes, or resisted his will, was treated in like manner ; and parliament, by passing a bill to give royal proclamations the full force of law, placed in his hands unlimited power. Queen Anne, who had pre-

sented the king with a daughter, and had been highly cherished for three years, after that time lost her husband's affections, which were now bestowed upon Lady Jane Seymour. Anne Boleyn was therefore condemned to death on false pretences ; and the day after her head fell by the executioner's axe, the king married the new object of his impure love. In about a year the young queen gave birth to a son, Edward, and died immediately after. Three times more the vicious and capricious tyrant contracted the bonds of wedlock, and twice more broke them at his pleasure. The Princess Anne of Cleves was repudiated after a few weeks, because she was plain in person and ungraceful in manner ; Catharine Howard, niece of the Duke of Norfolk, was beheaded because of faults committed before her marriage ; and Catharine Parr, widow of Lord Latimer, narrowly escaped the same sentence, because she entered into religious controversies with her royal husband. In the meanwhile the king continued his innovations in the church ; and his health having given way, the irritability and malignity of his temper increased with his bodily sufferings ; and neither sex nor age, rank nor learning, was admitted as

a plea in favour of those who incurred his displeasure.

At length, in 1547, death put an end to the sufferings and the crimes of the tyrant, and the young son of Jane Seymour succeeded to the throne by the title of Edward VI. During the reign of this monarch, who lived only until he was sixteen, the true work of the Reformation took place in England ; the reformed religion was established in the country without bloodshed or violence, and the most cruel laws of King Henry were repealed. But the extreme youth and weak health of the king gave rise to many ambitious schemes, and his short reign was disturbed by the intrigues of his uncle, Sir Thomas Seymour, and Dudley, Earl of Warwick, afterwards created Duke of Northumberland. Sir Thomas Seymour, and his brother the Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector during Edward's minority, at length fell victims to the inordinate ambition of Northumberland, who, having obtained supreme power, and having won the king's favour, endeavoured by means of the latter to perpetrate the former. Having married his son Lord Guildford Dudley to Lady Jane Grey (granddaughter of Mary Tudor, the sister

of Henry VIII., who was first married to King Louis XII. of France, and afterwards to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk), he began to work upon the mind of the young king to induce him to change the order of succession to the throne in favour of Lady Jane. Henry VIII. had by his will determined that in case his son and his two daughters should die without issue, the crown should revert to the descendants of his younger sister Mary, to the exclusion of those of his elder sister Margaret, who had married James IV., king of Scotland. Northumberland's efforts were directed towards inducing Edward, in like manner, to exclude his half-sisters, and in case he should die without issue, to let the crown pass at once to the descendants of the queen of France. The Princess Mary, daughter of Queen Catharine, had, by persevering in the Roman Catholic faith, caused much uneasiness to the young king, who was warmly attached to the reformed tenets ; and, as far as she was concerned, he was not disinclined to listen to a plan which might avert from the country the danger of the re-establishment of the Romish church. But his sister Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, Edward sincerely

loved ; and he was therefore averse to attack her rights. However, Northumberland represented to him that Mary could only be excluded on the plea of illegitimacy, and that the same stigma attached to the birth of Elizabeth, Henry VIII. having annulled his marriage with the mothers of both the princesses, on pretence of their illegality. Edward was on the brink of the grave ; recent illness had further enfeebled his sinking constitution ; he was warmly attached to his cousin Lady Jane Grey, who had been the companion of his childhood and his youth ; and he yielded to the importunities of her father-in-law, but died before the proposed change in the succession had been submitted to and sanctioned by parliament.

Northumberland immediately took measures to have the Lady Jane proclaimed queen ; and this young princess, as remarkable for her beauty as for her virtues and accomplishments, accepted with a bleeding heart a crown which, in her eyes, possessed no attractions. But she was soon relieved of the burthen ; for the Princess Mary, on hearing of her brother's death and Northumberland's treachery, speedily assembled an army, and marched upon London, where she was received

as the lawful sovereign, while Northumberland, in dismay, relinquished his daughter's claims. Mary possessed all her father's vices of character without any of those more amiable qualities which made him beloved in his youth. Obstinacy, bigotry, violence, cruelty, and a love of revenge, were her leading characteristics; and under their dominion she set about punishing her enemies, and re-establishing the Romish religion and hierarchy in England. Northumberland had deserved death, and was at once brought to the scaffold; but the young, the lovely, the virtuous Lady Jane, and her equally innocent husband, who had only yielded to parental authority and intreaty, were also condemned, and suffered death shortly after, though it was evident that the queen had nothing to fear from the ambition of one who had so reluctantly accepted of the crown. In dying, Lady Jane proved what she would have been in life. Supported by implicit trust in the love and mercy of God, she was enabled to behold with calmness her husband's mangled remains borne past her as she was on her way to the scaffold. Before the gentle girl placed her head on the block, she made a speech to the bystanders, in which she took all blame

upon herself for not having rejected the proffered crown with sufficient firmness ; declared her willingness to submit to death, as the only amends she could make to the injured state ; and expressed a hope that her example would prove a lesson to others, that the absence of selfish motives does not excuse actions which tend to the destruction of the commonwealth.

The axe having done its work, fagots and flames were next called in to do theirs ; and during a reign of five years, two hundred and ninety individuals, among whom five bishops, twenty-one clergymen, fifty-five women, and four children, expiated on the stake the crime of refusing to accept of the Roman Catholic faith, and of resisting the re-establishment of popish supremacy in England. Posterity has recorded its abhorrence of such deeds by the appellation of the Bloody Queen, generally given to Mary ; but while turning in disgust from the atrocious cruelty of the persecutors mentioned in history, we are, on the other hand, elevated by the contemplation of the fidelity unto death of the persecuted to what they believed to be a righteous cause. Mary had, contrary to the wishes of her people— who even took

to arms on the occasion—married Philip of Spain, one of the gloomiest and most bigoted Catholics of the times; but in the persecution of the English Protestants he had no share. He had married Mary from political motives, and was chiefly bent on engaging England in a war with France. In this object he at length succeeded; and Calais, the last continental possession of England, was lost. Her husband's coldness, her people's hatred, and a painful disease, had for some time been weighing heavily on Mary; this last humiliation gave her a fatal blow, and she died shortly after. The crown then passed to her half-sister Elizabeth, whom she had always disliked, and who was as fervently and constantly attached to the Reformed religion as Mary was to the Romish, though from prudence she had during her sister's reign pretended conformity to the latter.

CHAPTER XII.—THE MAIDEN QUEEN.

Elizabeth had spent her youth in retirement and study, and in a position which rendered circumspection, prudence, and self-control highly necessary; and her whole reign bore evidence of the qualities of mind thus acquired. Never had England possessed a more eminent sovereign—never was the country more respected abroad, and the government more honoured at home; but Elizabeth's policy was on all occasions marked not only by wisdom and prudence, but by a calculating selfishness which frequently degenerated into bad faith, and by a suppression of all the softer feelings of her sex, which sometimes amounted to hard-heartedness. The re-establishment of the Reformed religion, immediately after her accession, was indeed attended with no persecution and no cruelty; but her conduct to her ill-fated cousin, the beautiful queen of Scots, partook of both, while her interference in the affairs of Scotland was wily and selfish in the extreme.

Mary Stuart, granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, who had succeeded, when an infant, to the crown of Scotland, had at a very early age been sent to France, and married to the dauphin, afterwards Francis II., while her mother, a French princess, governed in Scotland as regent. Immediately after Elizabeth's accession, Mary, by the advice of her uncles the Dukes of Guise, assumed the title of queen of England—a plan being laid to uphold her right of inheritance against that of Elizabeth, whose illegitimate birth, it was maintained, ought by right to exclude her from the throne. When Elizabeth demanded reason for the strange assumption of the queen of Scotland, it was replied that it was merely an act of retaliation, because she herself assumed the title of queen of France. Elizabeth, nevertheless, fully understood the real intention, and she conceived a violent hostility to Mary Stuart, who ever afterwards appeared to her in the light of an enemy, ready to deprive her of her throne whenever an opportunity should offer; while in reality Mary, even after she had renounced her uncles' aggressive projects, was the next in succession to the crown, should Elizabeth die with-

out children. The state of Scotland, where the Reformation had led to the most violent dissensions, afforded frequent occasions for interference; and Elizabeth, not only from personal hatred to Mary, who was a Catholic, but from well-understood policy, always supported the Protestant party, which persecuted the young and beautiful queen because of her faithful adherence to the religion in which she had been educated, and of the gaiety and frivolity of the French manners, which she had adopted during her long residence in France. Mary's conduct, it is true, was frequently such as to give her enemies weapons in their hands against her. After the death of Francis II., when she returned to Scotland, she married her cousin Lord Darnley, whose misconduct, however, soon led to an estrangement between them. During this period Darnley was foully murdered. The Earl of Bothwell, his personal enemy, was commonly accused of having committed the deed, and Mary was conjured to bring him to trial. Instead of doing this, however, the queen married Bothwell a few weeks after her husband's murder. Until that moment, Mary's extraordinary beauty, and gentle, fascinating manners, had

given her a hold upon the affection of the great mass of her people, in spite of their abhorrence of her religion. But her conduct on this occasion called forth universal indignation. An insurrection ensued; Bothwell was obliged to flee, and Mary to surrender herself into the hands of the rebels, who imprisoned her in the castle of Lochleven, where she was afterwards forced to sign her abdication in favour of her son, then one year old. The baby was crowned shortly after under the name of James VI., and the mother was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. But Mary's beauty won the heart of her jailer, who opened her prison doors, and she was soon after at the head of an army; but only to encounter defeat. Forced to flee before the troops of the Regent Murray, her half-brother, Mary now sought refuge in England, expecting to meet with a hospitable reception from Elizabeth, who had protested against the violent proceedings of her subjects, and against her forced abdication. But it did not suit Elizabeth to break with the reformed party in Scotland; so, instead of being received at court, and treated like a queen, Mary was put into confinement, and, under one pretext or

another, was kept a close prisoner in England eighteen years. During this period various schemes were devised by the Roman Catholic powers for the universal suppression of Protestantism. In France, the horrid massacres of St Bartholomew took place, during which 60,000 Protestants were assassinated in cold blood ; and in England several plots were got up to release Mary, by means of foreign invasions ; to depose, and even murder the queen ; and to re-establish the supremacy of the pope. Each conspiracy was detected and counteracted in time by the vigilance and wisdom of Elizabeth and the eminent statesman Lord Burleigh, who sat in her councils. At length, in 1587, Elizabeth's ministers succeeded in making out what they considered a clear case of Mary Stuart's having connived at one of these conspiracies, and the Queen of Scots was tried by a commission formed of English peers, and condemned to death. Total seclusion from the world during eighteen years had prepared Mary to resign life without a regret ; but her spirit was not broken, and to the last she bore herself with royal dignity, and submitted to her sentence with the utmost firmness, though protesting against the right of

those who presumed to be her judges. Never before had the world beheld such a spectacle as the sovereign of one country pronouncing sentence of death on the sovereign of another, and the indignation felt was universal. Elizabeth, who, during Mary's eighteen years of sorrow and suffering, had treated her with the utmost hard-heartedness, and who had signed her death-warrant, now feigned the deepest grief at her death, and pretended that the sentence had been carried out without her knowledge; but no one was imposed upon by her hypocrisy.

While Elizabeth at home kept down Roman Catholic discontent with a strong hand, and by means of severe repressive laws, her aid and protection was afforded to the oppressed Protestants throughout Europe, though she continued to maintain a semblance of amicable relations with the sovereigns against whom they were in several cases in open rebellion. Once only did she depart from this rule, by adopting openly the cause of the Netherlands, then about to throw off the yoke of Spain. This engaged England in a war with Philip II., who fitted out for the invasion of this country a fleet and an army on a scale of magnificence never before

witnessed in Europe. Even Queen Elizabeth's brave heart misgave her, for her people had long been unaccustomed to war; she possessed no standing army, and the royal navy consisted only of thirty-four ships; and to add to her perplexities, the pope had just pronounced sentence of deposition against her, and she did not know what effect this might produce on the loyalty of her Roman Catholic subjects. But at a moment when all other countries of Europe were distracted by the civil wars caused by religious dissensions, the English nation set a bright example of high-minded patriotism. Every difference was forgotten in solicitude for the welfare and independence of the common fatherland. Catholics and Protestants alike flocked round the queen, to offer their services; all ranks of men flew to arms; and soon the country presented the appearance of a vast camp, so speedily had the nation transformed itself into an army for the defence of its shores. Unlike her sister Mary, who, after her marriage with Philip, had hedged herself round with stiff, formal, heartless Spanish etiquette, Elizabeth had always mixed freely with her subjects, been present at the innocent sports and pastimes of

the humbler classes, and by her affability and condescension won their hearts, while her intellectual acquirements and great natural talents insured the respect of the higher classes. On this occasion, also, she did not fail by her personal presence to heighten the enthusiasm of her people. She visited the docks where the fleet was fitting out, and addressed the sailors in tones of encouragement and cheerfulness ; she rode down the ranks of the army, and promised the troops to lead them in person to battle. But this time—the first, but not the last in English history—it was the sailors who were to have the honour of saving their country ; for the Invincible Armada—as the Spaniards called their fleet, in anticipation of victory—never touched the shores of England. Adverse winds, and the bravery and skill of the English admiral, Lord Howard de Effingham, and the seamen serving under him, dispersed Philip's ships before they reached so far ; and after repeated defeats and innumerable disasters, the Spanish fleet and army returned home in diminished numbers, to tell of the indomitable valour of the English sailors, and the dangers of the English seas.

At the commencement of her reign, Queen Elizabeth, when pressed to form a matrimonial alliance, replied that she desired no better epitaph than the inscription, "Here lies Elizabeth, who lived and died a maiden queen." To the determination thus expressed she remained faithful to the last, though at different periods of her life she showed herself capable of strong attachments. When she grew old, she conceived quite a maternal affection for the young Lord Essex, whom she loaded with favours. But Essex was a wayward spirit, and caused his doting sovereign much sorrow. At length he so far forgot himself in a moment of resentment as to endeavour to raise an insurrection in London. He was committed to the Tower, tried, and condemned to death for high treason. Until that moment he had remained obstinate, and would not sue for pardon from her who longed to grant it, but who never forgot the dignity of the sovereign in the tenderness of the woman. But now the love of life prevailed, and by the Countess of Nottingham he sent to the queen a ring which she had once given to him, with the promise that, if he were ever in trouble, she would, if this ring were presented to her, come

to his assistance. Lady Nottingham's husband, however, was Essex's enemy, and the ring never reached the queen. Essex suffered his doom, and from that moment it was evident that the queen's life was blighted ; yet she still bore up, and nowise neglected the business of the state. But Lady Nottingham fell ill, and thinking she was about to die, begged the queen to come to her, disclosed the fatal secret, and implored her mistress's pardon. For some moments the queen was stunned with horror, then seizing the countess by the arm, she shook her violently, and exclaimed, "God may pardon you—I never can!" Then bursting from the room, she returned to her own apartments, threw herself upon the ground, and never rose again.

During the reign of Elizabeth, as well as that of her two immediate predecessors, the spirit of liberty, which some years afterwards broke out into such wild excesses, found no voice in parliament ; no resistance was made to the sovereign's demands, except when money-supplies were wanted ; and no Russian czar ever ruled with more despotic sway than the people's favourite—Queen Bess. Even in the smallest thing she did not hesitate to give her wishes the force of

law. She disliked the smell of woad—a plant used in dyeing—and a royal proclamation forbade its cultivation. She also disliked the high ruffs and long swords which came into fashion in her day, and she declared open war against them, sending about people to cut and break the offenders wherever they met with them. She also issued proclamations against other species of luxury, which began to increase much during her reign ; but her example was at variance with her precepts, for she was very vain, and very fond of personal adornment, and at her death left no less than 3000 dresses in her wardrobe ! During the first thirty years of her reign, the queen, when she went out on state occasions, appeared mounted on horseback behind her chamberlain ; but after this period the Earl of Arundel introduced coaches into England, and the queen also had one. This same Earl of Arundel was the first who built a house of bricks in London, all private houses being until then built of wood, and during this reign also glass windows were first introduced. But though private dwellings were so humble in their material and design, the capital was not wanting in beautiful architectural features ; for Westminster

Abbey and Westminster Hall, as well as several other fine buildings still extant, are the works of a much earlier period. Whitehall was built and inhabited by Cardinal Wolsey ; and Somerset House was the palace of the Lord Protector Somerset.

CHAPTER XIII.—JAMES I.

Providence had now brought about that union of the crowns of England and Scotland which the English sovereigns had so repeatedly laboured in vain to effect, for on Elizabeth's demise the crown reverted by right to the son of the unhappy Mary Stuart, the sixth of his name in Scotland, but who in English history bears the title of James I. But though the crowns were united on one head, the kingdoms continued for a long while to have distinct administrations. In person and manner James was very different from his beautiful and fascinating mother, for he was awkward and ungainly;

while in character he was so strange a mixture of contradictory qualities, that several historians have amused themselves with describing him in a string of paradoxes. The love of ease and the love of power were prominent characteristics of his mind ; and having in consequence been sorely troubled by his refractory subjects in Scotland, his accession to the throne of England filled him with delight, because he flattered himself that in this country he should enjoy the happiness of having everything his own way. But when the firm hand which had so long held the reins of the state was supplanted by one of feebler grasp, it became evident that a new spirit was beginning to stir in the nation and in parliament, and King James frequently found his English subjects as difficult to manage as the Scotch. As for the Roman Catholics—against whom, in Elizabeth's time, severe and oppressive laws had been passed, in consequence of their repeatedly-evinced disaffection—they had flattered themselves that, on the accession of Mary Stuart's son, these would be repealed ; and when therefore James, brought up in the tenets of the Reformed Church, on the contrary expressed his determination to persevere in all Elizabeth's

rigorous measures against them, their displeasure knew no bounds. Some gentlemen of that faith even entered into an atrocious conspiracy, commonly called the Gunpowder Plot, by means of which they intended, by one destructive blow, to get rid of the king and the most powerful of their enemies. Having hired a house next to the houses of parliament, they contrived, through a hole in the wall, to introduce into the cellar under the House of Lords a great quantity of gunpowder, and it was determined that, on the 5th of November 1605, when the king, the queen, the princes, the peers, and the members of the House of Commons should assemble in parliament, the train should be fired by one of the conspirators, a Yorkshire gentleman, by name Guy Fawkes, and a common ruin embrace all. Happily one of the conspirators was anxious to save a friend among the peers, and thus the fearful plot was discovered before the crime was perpetrated. The willingness to forgive evinced by King James on this occasion, and his desire to be tolerant to the Catholics—proved on future occasions—rendered him suspicious in the eyes of the reformed party in England; while his endeavours to introduce Episcopacy in Scotland,

where the people were zealously attached to Presbyterianism (the form of church government established by Calvin, the reformer of Geneva), rendered him unpopular among his Scottish subjects ; and to the end of his reign this king never satisfied any party or settled any dispute.

Though unsuccessful in England and Scotland, James I. was able to do for Ireland more than any English sovereign before him had accomplished. Ireland, nominally subjugated, and under the rules of English laws, had made very little progress since the time that Henry II. first carried his arms into the country, and the English governors and armies despatched thither had done little for the establishment of order—the first condition of civilisation. But King James had recourse to better means than force : he parcelled out the lands of Ulster, and bestowed them on English and Scotch immigrants. These new settlers served as examples to the natives, among whom lands were likewise distributed : who were taught the arts of agriculture and manufacture ; who were blessed with laws that secured them against violence and oppression, and rendered life and property safe in the country ; and who thence-

forward began to settle down into a comparatively quiet and industrious race. About this time also Sir Walter Raleigh introduced on his estate in Ireland the culture of the potato, which root he had brought with him from the English colony he had founded in America during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and to which he had given the name of Virginia, in honour of the maiden queen. This colony did not flourish; but another settlement, which took the name of New England, was made in King James's reign, and considerably increased during the subsequent reign, and laid the foundation of the British empire in America.

If there was one strong point in King James's character, it was his detestation of war; yet he was forced into a war with Spain by a romantic incident, pleasing to his people, because it afforded a pretext for hostilities against a Catholic power; for in those days of superstitious bigotry and mistaken zeal much injustice was perpetrated by all parties in the name of religion. The king had a young favourite, by name George Villiers, whom he had raised to the rank and title of Duke of Buckingham, and who governed him with an irresistible

sway. Being a man of no principles, but of fiery passions, of a capricious and haughty temper, and strongly addicted to pleasure, Buckingham, besides interfering injuriously in public affairs, in private life led the poor weak king into the commission of many follies. He encouraged him in his dislike of business, and induced him to spend his time with cock-fighting, hunting, hawking, and carousing, and his money in shows, tournaments, combats of wild beasts, &c. ; and though Charles, the Prince of Wales, was of a very different temperament, the unworthy favourite, being gifted with most attractive manners, exercised a kind of fascination over him also. Now it so happened that King James, who was always in want of money, and never could induce his parliament to grant him sufficient supplies, cast his eyes on a Spanish princess as a desirable match for his son, on account of the rich dower which would be bestowed upon her. Spain was a Catholic country, and the alliance therefore highly distasteful to the English ; and the Spanish court on its side did not show much alacrity in concluding the match. Pending the decision, the Duke of Buckingham, desirous of

a frolic, persuaded the Prince of Wales, who was of a romantic turn of mind, to undertake a journey *incognito* to Madrid ; to learn to know, and to win the heart of his destined bride, before entering into irrevocable engagements ; and thus to prepare for her a happier future than was generally the lot of princesses, obliged by reasons of state to marry men they did not know, and often could not love. The prince, much pleased with the plan, set out in company with the duke and one attendant only. They passed through France without being recognised, and even attended a court ball, where Charles saw for the first time, and danced with, the beautiful Henrietta Maria, daughter of King Louis XIII. of France. On the arrival of the adventurers in Madrid, the rank of the prince soon became known ; and the Spaniards, highly flattered by the confidence shown by his venturing alone and unprotected among them, and much pleased with the dignity and reserve of his manners, overwhelmed him with honours and attentions ; and the king of Spain, in order to return confidence with confidence, presented him with a golden key, by means of which he might introduce himself into the royal presence

whenever he pleased. The princess, however, Charles never saw but in public ; and whether she there failed to win his heart—whether the image of the lovely Henrietta Maria interposed—or whether the advice of the Duke of Buckingham prevailed (who was displeased with the little attention paid to him by the Spanish court), the prince, on his return home, declared his intention not to marry the Spanish princess, and soon after sued for and obtained the hand of the Princess of France. Spain, in resentment of the insult, began to arm ; and though King James would willingly have conciliated the indignant Spaniards, the wishes of his people forced him to be the first to declare war.

CHAPTER XIV.—KING CHARLES THE MARTYR.

Prince Charles was high in favour with the public when his father died, the year after his romantic expedition to Spain, and he assumed the reins of government with a most earnest

desire to promote the welfare of his people ; but he soon learned that he and his subjects differed much in their views of the means by which this was to be accomplished. During the reign of the House of Tudor the power of the sovereigns of England, though constitutionally limited by the existence of a parliament, had in practice become almost absolute ; for royal proclamations had obtained the full force of law, and the sovereign could at his pleasure remove the members of the two courts called the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission, in which he presided as supreme judge, and which possessed unlimited discretionary power to fine, imprison, or inflict corporal punishment, and even punishment of death, on all citizens cited before them, and for all kind of offences ; besides which, the crown might at any time nominate courts - martial, which executed prompt and arbitrary judgment not only upon soldiers, but upon all citizens. In addition to this, any subject of the realm, whatever his position, might be arrested and kept in confinement for any length of time upon the mere warrant of a secretary of state. Where the crown possessed such means of enforcing its will, independent of

the authority of parliament, the enactments of that body of course became of secondary importance, particularly as long as the great mass of the people did not take an interest in public affairs, and did not in consequence throw their influence into the scale on the side of parliament. It was therefore only when they wanted money that the sovereigns were obliged to have recourse to parliament, yet even this dependence they were able to evade by the usages of the times; for when parliament refused a subsidy, as the money voted by it was called, the sovereign raised arbitrary taxes.

Charles I., brought up with exalted notions of the prerogatives of the crown, never doubted of his full right to exercise all those transmitted to him by his predecessors, and which had not, until the reign of his father, been disputed by parliament. But the diffusion of knowledge caused by the invention of the printing-press, and the spirit of free inquiry to which the religious innovations had given rise, had worked a change in the English nation. The reasoning powers exercised on theological subjects, and on matters of church government and discipline, were also brought to bear on the subject of civil

government and the rights of the citizen. On all these matters, however, opinions were divided, and at the time of Charles's accession three parties prevailed in the nation and in the parliament. These were the Puritans—a numerous, enthusiastic, and extending body, who, conceiving that the Church of England had not separated itself sufficiently from that of Rome, was greatly opposed to it on that account, and denounced its forms and ceremonies in most exaggerated language; and who, being themselves extremely austere in manner, evinced great hostility to the king and court, not only because of their upholding the established church, but because of their gaiety of life and manner. In the eyes of these people every innocent amusement, as every pomp and ceremony, was sinful and connected with popery; and they sought to reform society, church, and state, according to their notions of Scriptural doctrine. The second party was composed of men of high talent and abilities, who, with well-defined notions of civil liberty, sought to realise these in the constitution of England. The third party was made up of those who, brought up in high principles of loyalty, would not admit that the king could

err, and thought that they ought to uphold him in all things.

Immediately on coming to the throne, Charles, who had inherited his father's debts and the Spanish war, required the aid of parliament for obtaining supplies, and it was at once determined by the party bent on reform that they should avail themselves of his necessities to curtail his prerogatives. From the moment that they began to act on this determination, a struggle for supremacy began between the crown and the House of Commons, which, though at first carried on by the latter by strictly constitutional means, and with a very laudable purpose, at last degenerated into civil war, and led to the overthrow of the constitution. The first victory gained by parliament was the obtaining the royal sanction to the famous Petition of Rights, which considerably curtailed the prerogatives of the crown, and gave guarantees for the liberty of the subject, and which, next to Magna Charta, is considered the great palladium of England's liberty. But in spite of the restrictions thus imposed upon him, the king continued to avail himself of his ancient prerogatives to resist the parliament, and make himself

independent of its opposition. These proceedings being now illegal, his opponents obtained new weapons against him, and matters became worse and worse. At length, in 1629, the king dissolved the parliament then sitting, and he did not convoke another until 1640. During the interval he proceeded in the most arbitrary manner against the civil and religious liberty of his subjects, availing himself of the Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission for his purposes. The spirit of religious fanaticism increased with the king's and Archbishop Laud's measures to force all sects into conformity with the established church; and the same being done in Scotland, where the hatred of the Episcopal form of church government was much stronger and more universal than in England, the people there broke out into open rebellion. They entered into a bond, which they called the Solemn League and Covenant, for the subversion of prelacy, and a formidable army assembled and went forth to do battle for what they considered the only true religion; for in those days all sects were equally intolerant. In Ireland, also, a rebellion had previously broken out, and which, though put down by the king's devoted

friend, the Earl of Strafford, yet required the maintenance of a military force. The king, sorely beset for money, and not venturing at this juncture to have recourse to any of the arbitrary means which had before caused so much discontent, was obliged to call a parliament. The first was found impracticable, and was immediately dissolved. Another was convoked, but proved itself of the same temper. Its first proceeding was to condemn as illegal and oppressive every act of the king during the interval of twelve years in which no parliament had met; and it then went on curtailing the dangerous and unjust prerogatives of the crown, and introducing reforms calculated to insure justice and rational liberty. Its next step, however, was not reformatory, but revolutionary: it passed a bill to the effect that it could not be dissolved without its own consent; and the king, who had no means of resistance, gave his sanction to a law which virtually deprived him of all power; and he continued to yield right after right, until nothing remained of his sovereignty but the name. He even went so far in his weakness as to sign the death-warrant of Lord Strafford, who, because of his fidelity to

the crown, had become obnoxious to parliament, and had been condemned for high treason. By this single act King Charles has almost forfeited the sympathy of posterity, which, however great his errors as a king, is due to him for his eminent private virtues and the general purity of his life.

Soon it became evident that even the empty title of king was too much for the faction which now swayed the country, and that republican principles were at work in the parliament. The king's adherents, distracted and divided among themselves, fled from their posts, and left the revolutionary party in undisputed possession of the parliamentary field. The movements of the legislative body, which was now also the executive, became so threatening, that the king, no longer considering himself safe in its vicinity, fled to York, and sent the queen abroad with the crown-plate and jewels, to raise a sum of money wherewith to levy a military force. At length the sword was drawn, and civil war raged from one extremity of the land to the other. The sympathies of the great mass of the people were with the Roundheads, as the Puritans were called by the Royalists, who in their turn received the name of Cavaliers. With the par-

liament money was abundant, the people making every sacrifice in its favour ; and its armies became day by day more numerous and better disciplined. The king had no other resources than the private means of his followers, who generously devoted life and fortune to his cause. In spite, however, of the loyalty of this faithful band, the royal cause succumbed. The spirit of the times required a reorganization of the royal power, and it was felt that King Charles would never submit to this. All his endeavours at reconciliation were therefore of no avail ; his sincerity was suspected ; and the war continued to rage. The royal troops receiving most inadequate pay, were driven either to desertion or to plunder ; and the king's cause was further damaged by these illegal proceedings ; while those among the country-people who had hitherto taken no part in the great struggle, were forced to take arms for the protection of their property. Armed with any kind of weapon or efficient instrument they could lay hold of, these clubmen, as they were called, moved about in bodies of from four to five thousand, and executed justice upon whomsoever they found in the act of plundering, without reference to

the party to which they belonged. The chief leader of the Scottish army was Leslie ; the English Parliamentary armies were headed by Essex, Fairfax, and Oliver Cromwell. The last was a private gentleman, who, by the superiority of his genius and his religious enthusiasm, had gained great influence, and who, when placed at the head of an army, proved himself a consummate general, though he had never served an apprenticeship to war. In the king's army none were more distinguished for valour and intrepidity than Prince Rupert (Charles's nephew), and the Marquis of Montrose, a Scottish nobleman.

The Royalists having been completely defeated in the battles of Marston Moor and Naseby, the king was induced to surrender himself to the Scots ; for the Presbyterian party, of which they formed the main force, had evinced less extreme views than those adopted by the Independents, headed by Oliver Cromwell and others, who at this juncture predominated in England, to the great disgust of the more moderate party in parliament and in the nation. In believing in the existence of a feeling of generosity among his Scottish enemies the king was singularly mistaken ; for they basely gave him up for a sum of money

to the English, who were anxious to obtain possession of the royal person. The king was delivered into the hands of commissioners nominated by parliament, but he was very soon after taken from these by a military detachment despatched from the Parliamentary army, which was now on all occasions acting in open opposition to its masters. The parliament represented Presbyterian opinions in religion, and in politics had gradually grown more moderate as it observed the extremes towards which the Independents—of whom the army was almost exclusively formed—were progressing. These were, what their name denoted them to be, persons who in church matters, as in civil matters, would recognise no constituted authority, and claimed absolute equality for all men. The spirit of insubordination called forth by such principles at length manifested itself in the ranks. The soldiers and officers constituted themselves into a kind of parliament for the discussion of public affairs, and prepared to use their power for enforcing their opinions. But Cromwell, who had hitherto held parliament in subjection by means of the army, was not of a temper to allow his servants to grow into his

masters. By a few prompt and energetic measures he repressed the rebellion, and again moulded his instrument to his hand. He next, with its aid, expelled from parliament those members which would not submit to the dictation of himself and his party, and induced the remaining members, commonly called "The Rump," to go through a mock trial of the king, and condemn him to death. On the 30th of January 1649, Charles—who throughout his trial had maintained a most dignified composure, and evinced a truly Christian spirit—was conducted to a scaffold erected in front of White-hall, where, after praying for the welfare of his country, and for his enemies, he laid his head upon the block, and died by a single blow—a martyr to the cause of royal absolutism, in opposition to the new ideas and feelings which had sprung up in the nation, and which he was neither by nature nor by education qualified to understand.

CHAPTER XV.—ENGLAND A REPUBLIC—THE RESTORATION.

With King Charles royalty ceased for a time to exist in England. Even the king's statue was pulled down, and on the pedestal were inscribed the words, "*Exit tyrannus, regum ultimo!*"—("The tyrant is gone, the last of the kings!") A new seal was formed for the state, on which was engraven the legend, "The first year of freedom, by God's blessing restored." The House of Lords, which savoured too much of regal pomp and the hereditary principle for the taste of the predominating faction, was abolished. The Prince of Wales was thenceforward to be named and recognised only as simple Charles Stuart; and public business was carried on in the name of the "Keepers of the Liberties of England," the few remaining members forming the House of Commons being supposed to be such. In truth, however, the liberty of the British islands for some time after the

king's execution was nothing but anarchy—the worst of despotisms. The Scots, who, on delivering up King Charles to the Parliamentary Commissioners, had stipulated for his personal safety, were highly indignant at his trial and execution. After his death they immediately proclaimed his eldest son, Charles II., king, and invited the prince to come over from the Netherlands, where he had sought refuge. In Ireland also a formidable movement, under the Marquis of Ormond, was being made in favour of royalty; and in England the parliament was neither popular nor obeyed, while the three factions that had long divided the country remained in the same hostile position towards each other. But at length the mighty spirit that had so greatly contributed to bring about the state of chaos which prevailed, stood forward to re-establish order by substituting the iron rule of one for the vacillating councils and the contending principles of many. Oliver Cromwell, having obtained the commission of lieutenant of Ireland, repaired to that country, where the danger was considered most imminent, and with a ruthless hand put an end to the disorders there. This done, he was placed

at the head of an army destined to reduce the Scots, who had been joined by Charles. The prince, seeing that he had no other chance of regaining the crown of his father, had, though reluctantly, consented to subscribe to the Covenant, a condition which the Scots had imposed upon him. He had found, however, on his arrival in Edinburgh, that he was regarded not with the respect due to a sovereign, but as a puppet, to be used for the purposes of others. He was not only compelled to do penance for his own sins, and for those of his father and grandfather, but was in many other ways insulted and humiliated by all classes of the nation. Yet in his name war was declared against the usurping parliament of England.

Cromwell gained repeated victories over the Scottish troops; and Charles having moved southwards, in the vain hope of being joined by great numbers of English, his army was completely routed at Worcester, and he was obliged to flee, as a persecuted traitor, from the realms to which he was born heir. Sometimes he was disguised as a peasant, sometimes as a servant, and at others again as a woman. On one occasion the prince owed his safety to the

concealing foliage of an oak-tree into which he had climbed, while a party of soldiers, sent out in pursuit of him, were passing by. This oak was for a very long time after an object of veneration to the Royalists, who gave it the name of the Royal Oak. At length the royal fugitive, by means of the devotion and fidelity of those who undertook to conduct him and conceal him—and who, in aiding him to escape, risked even their lives—reached in safety the shores of Sussex, and embarked thence for Normandy; while in England men began to call upon the parliament to dissolve itself, now that the civil war was at an end. The parliament, however, refusing to do this, on the contrary, endeavoured to get rid of the domineering influence of the army by issuing orders for disbanding it. But Oliver Cromwell, repairing to the House on the 20th April 1653, with a band of three hundred soldiers, declared to the members that they were no longer a parliament, ordered a soldier to seize the mace, which he called “a fool’s bauble,” and telling the members to “make way for better men,” drove them out before him, locked the doors of the House, put the key in his pocket, and thenceforward

constituted himself sole master in the British Empire. He caused summonses, it is true, to be issued to a certain number of individuals in England, Scotland, and Ireland, to come and form a kind of parliament, which, from the name of one of its members, acquired the appellation of the Barebones's Parliament ; but this body, formed of the wildest fanatics in the three realms, having evinced a disposition to govern, as if it held its authority from God, and not from Cromwell, it was in its turn ejected from St Stephens's by a detachment of soldiers acting under his directions. Cromwell, the idol of the army, was then, by its influence, declared Protector of the Commonwealth, and by means of a standing army of 20,000 men, the first that had ever been maintained in England, he governed as such until his death in 1658. This extraordinary man now proved, as a statesman, the superiority of the genius which had raised him to the position he held ; but though he made himself respected and feared abroad, where his armies, whenever they engaged in battle, were victorious, and where they gained for the English the important island of Jamaica ; and though he governed at home with wisdom and

moderation, and with a steady view to the public good, he never reconciled the nation to his usurpation, each party detesting him for reasons of its own. In the eyes of the Royalists he was the murderer of the king, and the usurper of his place ; in the opinion of the Presbyterians he was the persecutor of the Covenant ; while the Independents looked upon him as an apostate from their principles, and tried to get rid of him as a deadly enemy.

At the death of Oliver Cromwell, the Protectorship devolved upon his eldest son Richard, who, possessing neither his father's genius, energy, nor ambition, soon proved himself too weak to maintain his position. Having abdicated, he was succeeded in power by that parliament which, convoked under Charles I., had declared that it could not be dissolved except by its own consent, but which had been so unceremoniously turned out of doors by Cromwell. Another period of anarchy ensued, during which the parliament was again dismissed by a division of the army under General Lambert, and superseded by a body called the Committee of Safety, which governed until General Monk restored the monarchy and King Charles II. Monk, who

had been left by Cromwell chief in command in Scotland, and had, by his vigorous and wise measures, kept that turbulent country in a state of perfect submission, was in his youth an adherent of the royal cause. On beholding Lambert, whom he cordially hated, in power, the feelings of his youth seem to have revived, and he began to nourish plans of reinstating the royal house. But up to the moment of its realisation, his project remained a profound secret in his own bosom. He marched upon London, with the professed object of substituting the rule of a parliament for that of the Committee of Safety; but, as if by a sort of intuition, the Royalists flocked to his banners, and even the troops levied by the Committee to oppose him deserted in order to join him. The Committee feeling itself powerless to carry on government, then reinstated the Rump Parliament; and this latter body, obliged to bend to Monk's will, at his desire removed from the capital every soldier not under his command. The general's next step was to induce the parliament to dissolve itself; and in March 1660, the Long Parliament, as it was called, on account of the length of time it had nominally sat, at length put an

end to its own existence. A new parliament being called, the elections, as Monk had anticipated, went in favour of the royal cause, for all parties alike were tired of anarchy and tyranny. The parliament was constituted in its ancient form, the House of Commons being freely elected, and the peers resuming their seats in the House of Lords. One thing more only was wanting for the perfect restoration of the ancient constitution, and this soon followed. Monk, taking advantage of the disposition of the House, announced that a messenger was at the door with a letter from the king to the Commons. The messenger was admitted, and the letter, containing a promise of a general amnesty, was read. The effect was electrical; a cry of “God Save King Charles the Second!” burst from the assembly, and shortly after Charles was seated on the throne amidst universal rejoicings.

The king—easy, gay, and good-humoured, and possessed of manners singularly gracious and attractive—at first won all hearts by his cordial politeness and affability; but he was at the same time indolent and selfish to an extreme degree, as also unprincipled and profligate. His true character spoke out in the course of his

reign in deeds which made even the stanchest Royalist blush for the man in whose cause they had so freely bled, and filled every patriotic heart with a sense of shame and humiliation. Up to 1670, indeed, flagrant errors only marked the king's policy, though his measures had enabled the Dutch admiral, De Ruyter, to attack the coasts of England, to sack the naval arsenals at Sheerness, and to insult the national flag in the very port of London ; but in this year Charles selected for his ministers men as destitute of principle and honour as himself, and from this period forward he incurred by his conduct dishonour such as has never before or since been attached to the reputation of a sovereign prince. In order to gain the means of re-establishing the prerogatives of the crown, which had been limited at his accession, but still more for the purpose of obtaining money for the prosecution of his unworthy pleasures, he not only laid violent hands on the public funds, but he even stooped to accept of an annual subsidy from the king of France ; and, in return, sacrificed to that monarch the best interests of England abroad, and the allies with whom he had bound himself by treaty to act. In addition to these corrupt

proceedings, the king, a Roman Catholic at heart, though professing to be a Protestant, showed more favour to the members of that faith than his people would tolerate; while his brother the Duke of York, the next in succession to the crown, as the king had no legitimate children, openly declared his adherence to it. The people, driven to a state of fanatic fury, implicitly believed in all kinds of atrocious plots ascribed by bad and designing men to the Roman Catholics, and numbers of the latter were unjustly condemned by the tribunals on false evidence. Strenuous efforts were also made to exclude the Duke of York from the succession; and the hopes and affections of the people began to centre in the Duke of Monmouth, the king's natural son, who was in consequence induced to participate in conspiracies, which, being detected, led to his banishment. In Scotland, the Covenanters, continuing to protest against Episcopacy, which had been regularly established in the country at the Restoration, were objects of the most atrocious persecutions. Forbidden to worship God in peace after their own fashion, these men resorted with arms in their hands to the hill-sides, there to hold their

conventicles under the dome of heaven; and at last, driven to despair by oppression, broke out into open rebellion. The rebellion was put down, and barbarities, equal to the worst practised during the middle ages, were inflicted on the vanquished by the Duke of York.

While the bad and unbridled passions of man evinced themselves in such various ways during this disgraceful reign, the hand of Providence was laid heavily on the country. In the summer of 1665 a dreadful plague broke out in London, and soon transformed the capital—the scene on which a brilliant nobility and a gay and licentious court went through its daily routine of pleasure, and where the din and bustle of a great commercial mart broke constantly on the ear—into a dismal and deserted city of death, whose silence was disturbed only by the groans of the dying, or by the tinkling of the bell which at night announced that the death-cart was going its rounds to take from the houses, marked with a red cross, the victims of the pestilence. No coffins were prepared, no funeral service read, no mourners followed the heavily-freighted cart; the dead were as speedily as possible removed from the public gaze, and com-

mitted to the grave in the nearest cemetery. From the capital the plague spread to the surrounding country, and in a few months it is computed that a quarter of a million of persons fell victims to this dreadful disease. No sooner had men begun to recover from the panic it had inspired, and to return to their habits of business or of pleasure, than another calamity befell the capital, in the form of a dreadful fire, which reduced upwards of thirteen thousand houses and eighty-nine churches to ashes.

CHAPTER XVI.—THE REVOLUTION OF 1688— THE GOOD QUEEN ANNE.

Charles II. died of a fit of apoplexy in 1685, and his brother the Duke of York succeeded him under the title of James II. This prince, though always very unpopular, on account of his morose and bigoted character, his tendency to cruelty, and his open adherence to the Roman Catholic faith, had nevertheless acquired a

reputation for sincerity and honour. When, therefore, on his accession, he declared to the nation his intention to uphold the constitution in church and state, and assured it, that though he was reported to entertain arbitrary principles, it was his full intention to govern strictly according to the existing laws, perfect reliance was placed in his word ; and the nation felt the less uneasy, because both the king's daughters were educated in the Protestant religion, and were married to Protestant princes, and a Protestant succession was thus secured. But in spite of the king's protestations, his first act was an endeavour to raise taxes without the concurrence of parliament ; and his next step to send an agent to Rome to tender his submission to the pope, and to prepare for the readmission of England and Scotland into the bosom of the Roman Catholic church. Indeed his short reign was but a series of uninterrupted efforts to extinguish the faith and the liberty for the establishment of which the nation had struggled so hard and so painfully.

Before the king had had time to show his real intentions, and while, therefore, the nation was still inspired by feelings of loyalty towards

him, the misguided Duke of Monmouth, with a handful of followers, invaded England, maintaining that the late king had been privately married to his mother, and that, consequently, he was the rightful heir to the throne; and the Duke of Argyle landed in Scotland with a small force, and there proclaimed the cause of the Covenant. The two rebellions finding little support from the higher classes in particular, were easily subdued; but the excessive cruelty evinced towards the vanquished, served to render the king unpopular, and contributed greatly to his subsequent downfall. The Duke of Monmouth, who had fled from the field of battle after his final defeat, had exchanged clothes with a peasant, in the hope of escaping detection; but his horse having sunk under him from fatigue, he was obliged to conceal himself in a dry ditch, where he was at length discovered, with a few peas in his pocket, which he had picked in a field, and which had been his only sustenance. Unnerved by the hardships he had undergone, and having never possessed any strength of character, though noted for valour in the field, the unhappy fugitive burst into tears when seized by his pursuers, and

afterwards wrote the most submissive letters to the king, imploring mercy and forgiveness. But in spite of the weakness thus evinced, he honourably persevered in not betraying any of his coadjutors, and was handed over to the executioner to die the death of a rebel. After his execution began the legal proceedings against those who had espoused his cause. These have been denominated the “bloody assizes,” on account of the atrocious severity and injustice with which the prosecutions were carried on by Chief-justice Jefferies—a tiger in human form, who revelled in cruelty, and delighted in the agonies, mental and bodily, of his victims, and whose name is recorded in history as an object of universal execration. The king professed to disapprove of Jefferies’ proceedings; but the judge was promoted to the post of Lord Chancellor; and James then began in full earnest to push forward the accomplishment of his great objects—the re-establishment of the Romish religion and of the arbitrary power of the crown.

During three years the nation exerted itself in vain to counteract by legal means the king’s sinister plan; but in 1688, being driven to

extremities, and seeing the hope of a Protestant succession destroyed by the birth of a Prince of Wales, every idea of coming to an understanding with the king was abandoned. The Prince of Orange, Stadholder of the Netherlands, who was married to James's eldest daughter, was now invited to come to the rescue of the people of England. William of Orange landed at Torbay with an army of 14,000 men. The English flocked to his banners; even the men on whose fidelity the king most relied, those on whose gratitude he had most claims—even his most beloved daughter the Princess Anne, and her husband, Prince George of Denmark—deserted the falling monarch, and went over to the prince, who had raised the banner of Protestantism and liberty against Catholicism and despotism. James having previously sent his consort and the infant prince over to France, seeing that everything was lost, next endeavoured to make his escape. He cast the Great Seal into the river, and fled in the dead of night, but was seized by mistake, and brought back to London. His reappearance there, though in the character of a prisoner, was by no means agreeable to the Prince of Orange and the English statesmen

acting with him. They did not wish to proceed violently against the king, but, on the contrary, desired that by his flight from the country he should virtually abdicate the crown. James was therefore carelessly watched, and when he made another attempt to flee, was allowed to escape. In Scotland, as in England, hardly any effort was made to uphold the king's authority, and nothing remained but to settle who was to be his successor. All parties being anxious to maintain as far as possible the forms of law, and to avoid anarchy, though a nation was about to depose one monarch, and elect another, this took some little time. But eventually the crown was settled on the Prince and Princess of Orange conjointly, who reigned under the names of William and Mary; and it was determined that, after their death, they having no children, it was to devolve upon the Princess Anne and her posterity, to the exclusion of James's son, born just before the revolution. The same parliament that determined the succession also passed the Declaration of Rights, which was subsequently followed by the Bill of Rights—two documents which settled all the points hitherto in dispute between the

crown and the people, circumscribed the royal prerogatives within narrower limits than ever before, and insured to the British people the liberty which they now enjoy. In Scotland, the form of church government, so long and so zealously contended for, was granted, and for a time no objections were raised to the change of monarch.

King James, however, did not submit to his fate without making an attempt to regain his lost power. Ireland, where the Romish faith had always continued to prevail, and where the same reasons of discontent with his government did not therefore exist, declared almost unanimously for him; and thither the deposed monarch proceeded with some French troops. But James proved himself a most unskilful general, and his army having been completely defeated by William III. in the battle of the Boyne, he fled without a thought for any one but himself, and spent the rest of his life as an exile at St Germains in France, where he was most hospitably entertained by Louis XIV. In his former domains, in the meanwhile, party spirit was again running high; and at various periods the factions in the state even seemed

inclined to recall the exiled monarch; for William III., though a man of great ability, never became popular. Before he became king of England, his life had been devoted to the object of checking the power of France, which, under Louis XIV., had outgrown that of all other European governments; and, as king of England, he pursued the same policy. This made the English think that he neglected their affairs; while the extreme coldness and reserve of his manners, and the little tenderness he evinced towards the queen, to whom he seems, however, to have become in course of time sincerely attached, also contributed to make him disliked. Queen Mary died before her husband, and without having borne him children; and some years later, the son of the Princess Anne, the hope of the nation, also died. The same year King James departed life, and his son was recognised by France as king of England. The English parliament, then, to put an end to all intrigues, passed a bill determining that, at the demise of the Princess Anne, the crown should pass to Sophia, Electress of Hanover, and her descendants.

During the reign of Charles II. it had become

customary for the court party to call their opponents Whigs, because of their pretended resemblance to the fanatical Covenanters of Scotland, who were generally designated by that name. The national party retaliated by bestowing upon the king's supporters the name of Tories, which was a common appellation for a set of lawless men in Ireland, who were supposed to be under the influence of Popish priests. From that period up to the present day these two appellations have continued to be used to designate political parties in the country, though the principles which they represent have at various periods been very different. Queen Anne, who succeeded William III. in 1702, being of a weak character and mean intellect, but naturally warm-hearted and confiding, was constantly ruled by some favourite or other; and her reign, as regards internal matters, presents little else than the history of a struggle for power between Whigs and Tories. The Whigs were representatives of the opinions that prevailed at the Revolution; the Tories were such as inclined to a return towards the former state of things, and to the restoration of the exiled family; but in both parties there were corrupt

men, whose principles varied with the promises of personal advancement held out to them. Abroad, Anne's reign was rendered illustrious by the military genius of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, who, during the reign of James II., had risen by the king's favour from the position of a page to that of a peer ; who was one of the first to desert his royal master ; and who used the influence which his wife exercised over the Princess Anne to induce her also to abandon her father. On coming to the throne, Anne, following William's wise policy of preserving the balance of power in Europe, immediately engaged in the war of the Spanish Succession, in which almost all the states of Europe took part ; and Marlborough, who had already, under William, given an earnest of his talents as a military commander, was placed at the head of her armies. The names of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, Malplaquet, and others, inscribed on the banners of England, bear testimony to the brilliant victories of this renowned soldier ; but the rock-fortress of Gibraltar, one of the most important of England's foreign possessions, and which was taken, as it were, accidentally by Admiral Rooke, remains a still

more precious trophy of these wars. The most important transaction of Queen Anne's reign is, however, the union of the parliaments of England and Scotland, which was effected in 1707, and by which the countries became politically blended, under the name of the kingdom of Great Britain, though to Scotland was secured the full enjoyment of her laws, customs, and religion.

CHAPTER XVII.—THE HOUSE OF BRUNSWICK.

In 1714, at the death of Anne, whose infirmity of will, more than any very decided benevolence of character, obtained for her the name of the “Good Queen Anne,” the crown, by the law of succession, again devolved upon a foreign prince—George, Elector of Hanover and Brunswick. Though raised to the high fortune of being the ruler of one of the mightiest nations in the world, George's heart continued to be exclusively devoted to his hereditary German

dominions. To their interests those of England were sacrificed ; while in manners, language, and feeling, the king ever remained a stranger to his new subjects. The want of unity in the British nation, and of respect for established law, which is the unhappy consequence of all revolutions, had during the preceding reign evinced itself in the secret intrigues carried on with the exiled family of Stuart. In this reign it showed itself in open rebellion, when the Chevalier de St Georges (as James II.'s son styled himself) landed in Scotland in 1715, and made an attempt to reassert his claim to the throne. But the prevalent corruption spoke out still more plainly on occasion of the extraordinary scheme called the South-Sea Bubble, and others of the same nature. The first of these schemes was projected by a man named Blunt, who, having formed a company under the name of the South-Sea Company, obtained for it from government the exclusive right of trading with countries situated on the Pacific. He next, by a series of falsehoods and deceptions, made this trade appear as likely to prove most lucrative. The shares of his company, in consequence, rose to such a price, that the first holders in a few

days realised immense sums. When fortunes could be gained in so short a time without the trouble of working for them, all would be reapers of the golden harvest, and a perfect rage for stock-jobbing seized the nation. No scheme propounded seemed too preposterous for the greedy avidity with which shares in speculative undertakings were sought for. From morning till night the dark alleys of the city of London, where such transactions were effected, were thronged with a motley crowd. Here were seen statesmen, churchmen, and dissenters of all denominations ; physicians, lawyers, tradesmen, and simple artizans ; nay, even women of all ranks and classes, jostling each other in the race for riches ; and not only the names of dukes and marquises, but even that of the Prince of Wales was seen at the head of trading companies. A few brief weeks, and the frauds of the South-Sea Scheme were disclosed ; the shares declined as rapidly as they had risen ; another and another bubble burst ; and then came the sad moral of the tale. Those who had so hurried to grow rich without industry were precipitated into the direst poverty, and the nation was brought to the brink of ruin.

During the first half of George II.'s reign, the spectacle presented by the nation was still more disgraceful. Sir Robert Walpole, who during this period sat at the helm of the state, was a man without one honourable principle. Bribery and corruption of all kinds were his means of government ; and thus, unhappily, the moral taint spread from his mind to the whole people. Never, even during the middle ages, do the English seem to have been more vicious and more turbulent. Few men were above taking or offering a bribe ; and the police being inefficient, and the moral restraints in the breast of the people removed, robberies, assassinations, riots, and lawless tumults of all kinds were the order of the day. The flames of civil war also were again kindled by the Jacobites, as the partisans of the House of Stuart were called. In 1745, the banner of this family was for the last time unfurled in Britain, and the Pretender, or the Chevalier de St Georges, was proclaimed king in Scotland. But in spite of the chivalrous devotion of his Highland supporters in particular, his young and interesting son, Charles Edward, who had come over to maintain his cause, was completely defeated in the battle of

Culloden. A price of £30,000 was placed upon the head of the young prince; but notwithstanding the prevalent corruption, none were found base enough to betray him; and after undergoing toils and hardships innumerable, after having been forced to adopt as many disguises as his namesake Charles II., this descendant of a long and illustrious line of monarchs arrived in France in a state of utter destitution, and clad in rags.

The reign of George II. was a long one, and the political as well as moral state of Great Britain was much brighter at its close than at its opening. The British nation was indeed involved in wars which concerned only its German sovereign (for George was at heart as much a German, and as little of an Englishman, as his father); but though in Europe no advantages were derived from these wars, in America, Canada was added to our possessions, and in India a new empire was won; while the world resounded with the renown of the British fleets and armies.

Though, from the point of view of political morality, our country during several reigns had presented a deplorable spectacle, in other re-

spects it had moved rapidly onwards. Civil and religious liberty, such as had never before been known, was obtained at the Revolution. Its effects on the mind of the nation were evinced in the domain of literature, art, and science, in which genius shone forth conspicuously in all branches, and caused a proportionate advancement in the practical fields of commerce and manufactures, and in the general wellbeing of society. During the reign of George III. (1760–1820), the longest and most eventful in the British annals, this happy progress continued, and Britain bore with undiminished strength the loss of her most important colonies, and stood firm amid the shock of revolutions such as had never before convulsed the world. The colonies in America, the foundations of which were laid in the time of Elizabeth and James I., had in the course of time gradually extended, and others had been added to their number. In the times of the religious dissensions and religious intolerance in England more particularly, numbers of men flocked to the other side of the Atlantic, where they might worship God according to the dictates of their conscience. But whatever the motives

which drove the settlers from the mother country, they all, on arriving in America, made perfect civil and religious liberty the foundation of the societies they constituted. These societies, in consequence, flourished and increased ; and though many of the founders parted from England in disgust, separation obliterated the remembrance of past offences ; and up to the reign of George III., the inhabitants of New England remained loyal subjects of the British crown. But at this period George's unwise ministers, anxious to swell the revenues, which were greatly reduced by the war with France—begun under George II., and continued under his grandson—arbitrarily imposed new taxes on the flourishing New-England states. The liberty-loving colonists protested against this invasion of their rights ; the ministry would not yield, and foolishly drove the Americans to extremes. The States rose in insurrection : England in vain tried to subdue a unanimous people which had risen in defence of its rights ; and finally, in 1775, delegates from the thirteen united British provinces of North America met in Congress, renounced in the name of the people their allegiance to the British crown, and declared

the independence of their country under the name of the United States of North American independence which at length was recognised by Great Britain.

The Americans had been supported in the war of independence by France, and many French officers served in their armies. These, on their return home, spoke in terms of high admiration of the republican institutions of the United States, and added fuel to the fire that had for some time been smouldering in France. A revolution soon after broke out in that country, more dreadful in its lawless and sanguinary character than that in England under Charles I., but somewhat similar in its causes and consequences. But the French Revolution of 1789 kindled the flames of war throughout Europe ; for the French people, not content with beheading their own king, and erecting a republic at home, would have all nations follow their example. The consequence was, that all the kings of Europe made common cause against these propagandist republicans, and the king of England among the rest. Though some minds among the English caught the infection of the French revolutionary spirit, upon the whole the

nation remained calm, for it felt that it possessed the liberty necessary for its development in all directions, and a constitution that might be gradually reformed as the times might require. But in Ireland the case was different. In this kingdom, which had always been more or less mismanaged by the English government, a spirit of discontent was rankling, which broke out in open rebellion in 1797, when hope of assistance was held out by France. The French fleet sent out to aid the Irish was, however, beaten and dispersed by an English fleet ; and the year after, when another French force was despatched to Ireland, the spirit of the rebels, who had been repeatedly defeated by the king's troops, was already so broken, that they could not be induced to take up arms again.

The allied armies of Europe did not succeed in putting down the French republic, but the feat was accomplished by its own army ; and Napoleon Bonaparte, one of its own servants, and the idol of the army, then founded an imperial throne on its ruins. France was not, however, large enough for the ambition of him who had risen from the position of an obscure lieutenant to be an emperor ; he must needs have

all the crowned heads of Europe kneel at his feet ; and for this object, which was in a great measure attained, the soil of Europe was for many years deluged with blood. But one country there was which never crouched before the imperial eagle, against which, therefore, the Emperor Napoleon nourished the most intense hatred, and to humiliate which he would have given all his other laurels. Even where British armies and fleets were not present to oppose him, British money helped to maintain the fleets and armies of his other opponents ; and to the tremendous efforts and sacrifices made by Great Britain, Europe and France in a great measure owed their deliverance from the rule of this despot. The crowning victory of Waterloo, in which British valour and British generalship again bore a distinguished part, hurled Napoleon from his throne, and put an end to the war which, during twenty years, had devastated Europe ; and then devolved upon the British nation the melancholy part of being the jailers of the unscrupulous but mighty genius who during all these years had filled the astonished world with his renown. The fallen emperor was conveyed to the rocky island of St Helena, in

the Southern Atlantic, and there ended his eventful life as a state prisoner under the guardianship of the English government ; and England's statesmen helped to restore the disjointed political world to something like its former condition.

In the meanwhile George III. had been afflicted with a grievous mental malady, which rendered him unfit for governing, and his place was for several years filled by the Prince of Wales, who acted as Regent, and who eventually succeeded to the throne in 1820 by the title of George IV. Numerous were the wounds to be healed in Britain and in Europe after so many years of a life-and-death struggle ; but while Britain set about the task in earnest, Europe was convulsed by new struggles for that liberty which had been promised in the hour of danger, and was denied when the danger was past. These new revolutions, however, exercised no direct influence upon the internal affairs of our country, though no doubt they served to keep the nation in the path of reform and progress into which it had entered. During the first French Revolution a good deal of nonsense was spoken about the "rights of man," while

the most atrocious tyranny reigned under the name of liberty. But England understood the words in their true Christian sense, comprising the *duties* of man; and during the thirty-five years of peace vouchsafed to her, they have not been without a witness in her internal policy. In 1828 and 1829 the last vestiges of religious intolerance in her laws disappeared with the acts passed for placing the members of all Christian persuasions politically on the same footing.

In 1834, when William IV. had succeeded to his brother, who died in 1830, the foul stain of slavery was washed from the national escutcheon by the emancipation of the negro slaves in our West India possessions; and these great reforms have been followed by innumerable others, all having for their object the promotion of the general welfare, and particularly of those classes who can do least for themselves, and for whom, therefore, the mighty of the world are bound to do most. We have now come to mark eras, not by certain great battles, but by measures to promote not only the physical, but also the moral wellbeing of the people; not only by the reduction of taxes, by the establishment of free trade, by the commencement of sanitary reforms, but

also by the introduction of model prisons for the reformation of the criminal, by the establishment of schools for the instruction of the poor and ignorant, by endeavours to ameliorate the condition of labourers in mines, factories, &c. The campaigns in which we most glory are those which originate with the nation itself more than with the government, and are called free-trade movements, sanitary movements, educational movements, temperance movements, &c. Our trophies are such as are won by science in the material world, and in the moral world by Christian charity, with enlightenment for its weapon. During none of the many reigns touched upon in this history, therefore, has the nation had such truly glorious trophies to exhibit as during that of Queen Victoria, which began in 1837, at the death of her uncle King William;* and let us hope that her name may to future generations mark the era of England's definitive victory over the powers of darkness

* Females being by the laws of Hanover excluded from the throne in that country, the connection between the two crowns ceased at the accession of Queen Victoria; that of Hanover passing to the Duke of Cumberland, eldest surviving son of George III.

represented by sloth, squalor, indifference, intemperance, ignorance, crime, and all the bad passions which engender party strife and sectarian enmity. But that it may be so, all must use their best endeavours. great and small, young and old !

THE END.



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